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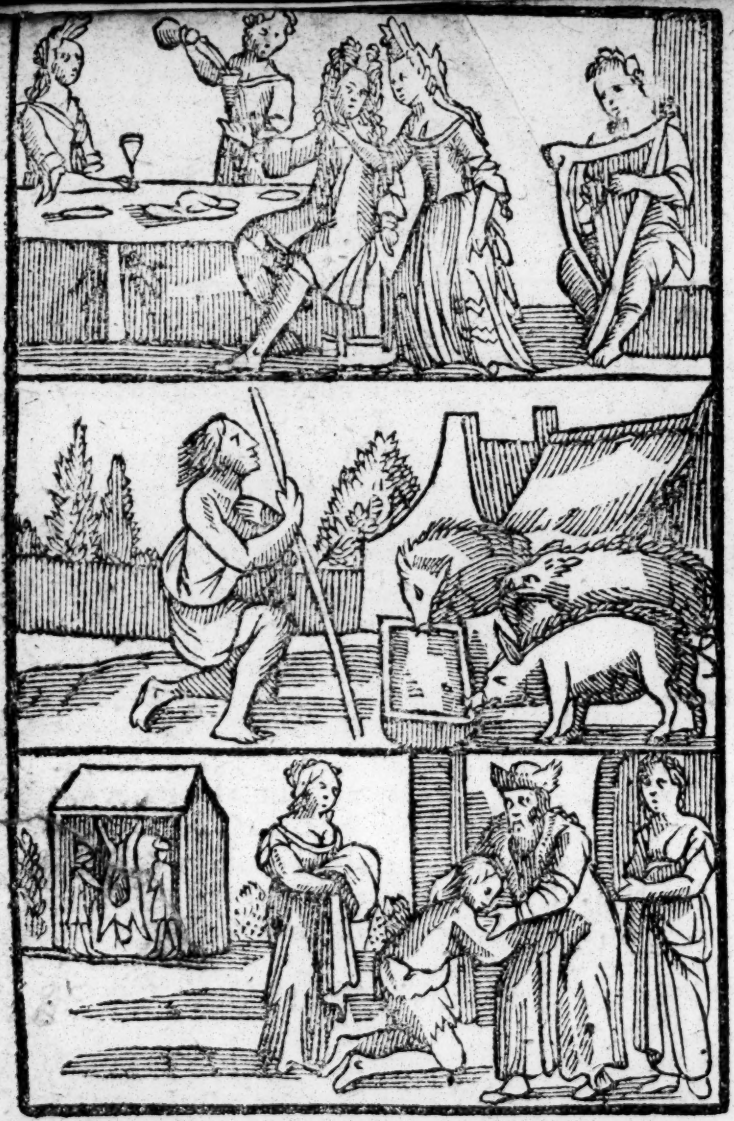

The Prodigal his Portion has, and he
Waſtes it on Women, Wine, and Luxury,
Until at laſt with Hogs he's forc'd to feed;
Nay, can't get Husks, tho' he has ne'et ſuch need.
Then to his Father he at laſt does go,
Whoſe open Arms does his Compaſſion ſhow.

THE Prodigal Son

Return'd to his Father's Houſe:

SHEWING

The Readineſs of GOD to pardon and forgive Returning

PRODIGALS.

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The Seventh Edition.

By *JOHN HAYWARD*, D. D.

Luke xv. 18.

I will ariſe and go to my Father, and ſay unto him, I have ſinned againſt Heaven and before Thee.

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DOMINUS ILLUMINATIO MEA

TO THE READER.

AS there is nothing that prevails with poor Prodigals to return to their Father's Houſe, more than the Remembrance of his being their Father; ſo there is nothing more affects the Heart of God, than to ſee his poor wandring Prodigals confeſſing their Sins and Unworthineſs, and returning to him, as to a Gracious and Merciful Father: This ſtirs up his Bowels of Compaſſion towards them: For as a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him. *And this Love of God to his returning Prodigals is the more amazing, in that theſe Prodigals make their Father's Houſe their laſt Refuge. Alas! could this Prodigal Son have but filled his Belly with the Husks that were given to the Swine, he would never have thought of the Bread that was in his Father's Houſe; but, like a Swine as he was, he would have fed*

among the Swine ſtill. But herein is the Riches of Divine Grace to be ador'd, that where God has a purpoſe of Grace to poor Sinners, he knocks his Fingers off of all other Holds (though they wou'd be but vain) that ſo, they ſeeing all other Refuges failing them, they may at laſt come to that try'd Stone, which God has laid for a Foundation in Zion ; *that ſo being built upon him, they might never be confounded. And this very kind Reception which poor returning Prodigals find from their Heavenly Father, after they have ſpent all their Portion in riotous Living, does exceedingly illuſtrate the rich Grace of God to poor Sinners, and an Encouragement to them to conſider their Ways, and be wiſe. And that the following Sermons may be ſo many prevailing Motives to them, to leave the Husks of brutiſh Appetites and Affections, which in the midſt of all their Fullneſs can never yield them any real Satisfaction, and that they may come to taſte of theſe true and reliſhing Delights which are laid up in him, in whom all Fullneſs dwells, is the Deſire and Prayer of*

Thy Soul's Well-wiſher,

J. H.

THE Prodigal Son RETURN'D To his Father's Houſe, &c.

SERMON I.

Luke xv. 17. 18, 19.

And when he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired Servants of my Father have Bread enough, and to ſpare, and I periſh with Hunger?

I will ariſe and go to my Father, and will ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee,

And am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hired Servants.

HAVING promis'd in a former Treatiſe * to ſhew the exceeding Readineſs and Mercy of *God*, in pardoning our Sins, upon our returning

* *Called*, The Sincere Penitent.

to

to him, I thought I could not do it better than by making the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Ground-work of my Diſcourſe: It being a ſufficient Foundation for the Superſtructure I am going to raiſe upon it, in all the ſeveral Branches thereof; and a lively Repreſentation of the State and Condition of every Man that comes into the World by Nature. For GOD has given every one a Portion, a Talent, ſomething that he may improve, to the Glory of his Name, and to his own Advantage: And we are all ſo Self-opinionated, and conceited of our own Abilities, that we are willing to have our Portion in our own Hands, and at our own Diſpoſal. We doubt not but we can of our ſelves improve it to the beſt Advantage; and therefore we come boldly with the Prodigal in our Text, and ſay to our Father, *Father, give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me.* And our indulgent Father (tho' he knows and ſees well enough what will be the Iſſue of it, and what a miſerable Improvement we ſhall make of our Portion, yet) that our ſelves may

may come to know ourſelves, and ſee the Evil that is in our own Hearts, he gratifies us in our fooliſh Requeſts, and delivers us our Portion into our own Hands: And while that laſts, we take *Solomon*'s ironical Counſel, *Eccleſ.* xi. 9. *Rejoyce, O Young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes.* Theſe Things we readily purſue, but little think of the heavy After-clap, *That for all theſe Things God will bring us unto Judgment.* The poor *Prodigal* no ſooner received his Portion, but he gave up the Reins to his Luſt, took his Full of *Senſual Pleaſures* and *Delights*; and ſoon ſpent his *Portion* and waſted his *Subſtance* with *Riotous Living.* And ſee now the bitter End of *Senſual Pleaſures:* After he had ſpent all, there aroſe mighty Famine in that Land, and began to be in Want: His *Portion* was ſpent, his Subſtance was waſted: Thoſe that had moſt, began to be in Want: What then muſt become of him that had ſpent all? It was no Wonder that he began to be in Want: What muſt

he now do? Why, he now goes and joyns himſelf to a *Citizen* of that Country; he had ſtill a Hankering after Sin, and therefore chuſes to be a Servant, a Slave, a Hog-keeper, rather than to leave that Country. O how much are poor Sinners in love with their Chains! How much rather had they to continue the *Slaves of Satan*, and the *Devil's Drudges*, than to think of getting into the glorious freedom of the Children of God? He had rather be a *Swine-herd*, a *Swine-feeder* in the *Kingdom of Darkneſs*, than once to think of returning to his *Father*. *David* profeſſes, *He had rather be a Door-keeper in the Houſe of his God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedneſs:* But this *Prodigal*, on the contrary, had rather be a *Hog-feeder* in the Tents of Wickedneſs, than to return to his *Father's Houſe*. But he muſt undergo further Hardſhips ſtill; and thoſe Husks that were ſcarce good enough for the Swine, are thought too good for him. He that a while ago, nothing would ſerve but the moſt Delicious Dainties, and the Choiceſt Wine, with whatever might

might ſtir up and maintain carnal Delights and Affections, is now brought to that paſs, that he would be glad to be a Meſs-mate with the Swine, and fill his Belly with the Husks that were given then: But, alas! even this was not permitted him; for no Man ga e unto him. And 'tis well they did not; for could he have got but a Belly full, tho' but of Husks and Hog's Meat, he would never have had a Thought of returning to his *Father's Houſe.* O how much Mercy is there in our worldly Diſappointments! How fain would we be taking hold of the things of this preſent Life, and cleaving faſt to them, if God by his *Providence* did not knock off our Fingers? O how fain would this *Prodigal* have fill'd his Belly with Husks, but no Man gave unto him! And truly this, to an Eye of Senſe, was a bad Condition, a moſt grievous Caſe indeed. What! not to be allow'd to feed among Swine! Not afforded a few Husks! What Condition could be more diſmal and deplorable? And yet this was the greateſt Mercy that could befal this *Prodigal*: There was no other way but

but this to cure him, to bring him to himſelf.

Sin is a bewitching thing; it effacinates the Soul, and takes away the right Uſe of our Reaſon: We act not, while we are under the Power of Sin, as Men, but as Mad-men; as thoſe that are beſides themſelves; and therefore the Prophet, or rather God by the Prophet, ſetting before his People the Madneſs and Folly of their Idolatry, bids 'em *remember this, and ſhew themſelves Men*; which is as much as if he had ſaid, Whilſt you follow your Idols, you are beſide your ſelves; you are effacinated; ſhew your ſelves but Men, and you muſt needs be convinc'd of your Folly. And ſo it was with this poor Prodigal; he had laid out himſelf in the Service of Sin, which had ſo much debaſed all his Faculties, and emaſculated his very Soul, that it had left no room in him for Conſideration; ſo that he could not ſo much as think what would be the Iſſue of it. But now being forced to bite upon the Bridle, and not ſo much as the Hopes of a Supply from any other Hand, being

in

in view, this was a Means of bringing him to himſelf: How many Souls are deſtroy'd for want of Conſideration! Now a Day of Adverſity is a Day of Conſideration: And hence the wiſe Man tells us, *Eccleſ.* vii. *In the Day of Adverſity conſider.* And therefore the firſt Step this Prodigal takes, in order to his Return, is to become a thinking and conſiderative Perſon: He debates his own Caſe with himſelf; for ſo ſays our Text, *When he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired Servants of my Father have Bread enough,* &c. Before he drove on furiouſly, conſidering nothing preſent, reflecting on nothing paſt, nor regarding any thing that might come after. Now he grows cool, reaſons the Caſe, and deliberates what is like to be the Iſſue of Things, if he continues thus, and what therefore is fitteſt to be done for the future.

And thus it is with every Penitent *returning Sinner:* The firſt Eſſay of *Repentance,* is a *Relenting Thoughtfulneſs,* and a ſerious and *Penſive Conſiderateneſs.* As ſoon as he is gotten out of

of the *Noiſe of the World*, the *Charms of Pleaſure*, and *Hurry of his own Paſſions*, he ſits down and conſiders, he endeavours to ſee with his own Eyes, and not be led by Rumour or Example; he exerciſes his Reaſon, and reſolves to judge impartially of Things, and from this *Epocha*, or *Point of Time*, the firſt Conceptions of Good in him bear Date.

But, 2. From the foreſaid *Deliberation*, he proceeds to *Reſolution: I will ariſe, and go to my Father, and ſay unto him*, &c. That is, I have been fooliſhly hurried on hitherto, and was upon the Brink of Deſtruction before I apprehended my Danger; I dreamed of new Diſcoveries of freſh Pleaſures in my bold Adventures; but now I perceive my Way is hedg'd up with Thorns, and there is but one Way left me; I muſt try my *Father's Clemency*, or periſh: whether he will receive me or not, I cannot tell; but that I find muſt be the Way, or none; therefore I am reſolved to make the Experiment: If he refuſes me, I am but where I was; but if he receives me, I am abundantly better;

better: It is better to retract my Folly, and live, than obſtinately to maintain my Poſt, and die miſerably; there is ſome Hope this Way, but none at all the other: Therefore *jacta eſt alea*, the Dye is caſt, and I am reſolv'd I will return.

Thus alſo it is with the penitent returning Sinner: *Now* (ſays he) *mine Eyes are open'd; and tho' very late, yet now at laſt I ſee my Danger; and bleſſed be God that I ſee whither I was going, before the Caſe be utterly deſperate: I am ſure to periſh for ever, if I continue my ſinful Courſe; and therefore, whatever come on't, I will return.* Whatever Diſcouragements for my Acceptance, my former Rebellion's ſet before me; or whatſoever Difficulty there may be for an old *habituated Sinner* to change his Byaſs, I am reſolved however, not to periſh fooliſhly, with my Hands folded up in my Boſom: No, *I will ariſe and go to my Father*; I will try whether he will refuſe me or not.

3. This Reſolution is followed by Execution, and actual Returning: He

is

is not like the Son that ſaid, *I go, Sir, but never went*, but he aroſe, and went to his *Father*. He that conſiders, and comes to no *Reſolution*, is like the Man that plows his Ground, and ſows no thing upon it: And he that reſolves, but executes not, is yet more ſottiſh; for he is at all the Coſt, and takes all the Pains, and reaps no Fruit of his *Labours*. There is ſuch a near Connexion between *Conſideration*, *Reſolution*, and *Execution*, and they are ſo naturally conſequent upon one another, that as on the one ſide Conſideration brings on Reſolution, and that, Practice; ſo much more on the other, from a Man's Practice, we may ordinarily pronounce his *Reſolutions*, and from that certainly calculate his Meditations. But the Prodigal he comes to this Point; I have delay'd too long already; I may conſider, and make Reſolutions, and yet ſit and ſtarve: It muſt be doing muſt reſcue me from my Miſery: And ſo he aroſe, and ſo doth the true returning Penitent: He out of hand cloſes with the bleſſed Jeſus upon his own, that is upon Goſpel-Terms.

But

But before we proceed, let us further obſerve, That the Prodigal's Repentance is here term'd, a Coming to himſelf; as if he had been out of his Wits before, as I have in part already touch'd upon; and from whence this Doctrine fairly offers it ſelf, That a Man in his Sins is out of his Senſes, a meer Madman, and out of his Wits. Sinners are *Bedlams* and *Lunaticks*, void of *Senſe* and *Reaſon*. And therefore thoſe forequoted Words of the Prophets, *Iſa.* xlvi. 8. *Remember this, and ſhew your ſelves Men; bring it again to Mind, O ye Tranſgreſſors*, may be better render'd, *Return to your Minds, O ye Tranſgreſſors*, or, *Return into your Hearts*, as *Calvin* reads them, making this very Note from thence, That they were not well in their Wits before: To which agrees *Muſculus Mentzerus*, with many others. And indeed the Words uſually uſed for Repentance, both in the *Greek* and *Latin*, ſhew as much; for the *Greek* Word is derived of another, which ſignifieth *Folly* and *Madneſs*, and is as much as *After-Wit*. And for the *Latin* Word, the Prophet in the former place cited, ſeemeth

ſeemeth to give the Signification of it: And it is no wonder, for their Reaſon and Judgment are now corrupted thro' Sin; ſo that as our Bleſſed Saviour ſaid, *They know not what they do.* And is it not the very Definition of a Mad-man, to be without Judgment, to follow his Fancy, and to be led by Appearances without Trial? Thus it is ſaid, *Luke* vi. 11. *They were filled with madneſs, and communed one with another what they might do to Jeſus.*

Now let the Uſes of the Point be theſe: Firſt, It may inform our Judgments concerning Sin and Sinners: Sin is Madneſs, and Sinners are Lunaticks, being poſſeſs'd with a Spiritual Frenzy and Madneſs. And if we do but behold 'em with a ſpiritual Eye, their Actions will declare it: Some run to and fro ſtark-naked, and bluſh not to tear off, and caſt away the Garments of Holineſs and Innocency: *Were they aſhamed,* ſaith *Jeremiah? Nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither did they bluſh,* Iſai. vi. 15. Are Men aſhamed of their flagitious Courſes, which lay them naked both to Shame and Judgment? Alas!

Alas! they are ſo far from it, that they Glory in them, never bluſhing for the committing of them. Others, (tho' ſometimes they keep within Compaſs, and ſeem to be well govern'd, as if they were no ſuch Men, for all Men are not always alike mad, yet) being a little diſpleas'd, are but in the leaſt croſs'd, ſtrait fall a playing of their mad Pranks, raging and raving againſt Heaven and Earth, curſing and banning all that ſpeak to them, and imprecating the Divine Majeſty to bring Damnation on their own Heads, infecting the very Air with their leud Speeches, and execrable Oaths, as if they would pluck Omnipotence out of his Throne, and crucifie the Saviour of the World afreſh: And would any but Mad-men act at ſuch a rate? Others again foam at the Mouth; their talk is idle and beaſtly, ſavouring neither of Wit nor Honeſty; the very Sparkles of Hell come forth from their Lips, whereat the Devil kindles the Fire of Diſſention. And is not this a plain Indication that they are Mad-men? But again, how deeply are others poſſeſs'd with

with the Spirit of Madneſs, who are never well, but when they are wounding, beating and deſtroying themſelves and others, waſting their Eſtates, conſuming their Bodies, and pitifully ſlaſhing of their Conſciences and Souls; yea, killing and deſtroying whoever they keep Company with, drawing them into the ſame Exceſs of Riot, that ſo they may all periſh together. In a Word, what mad Property is to be ſeen in a *Bedlamite*, that is not to be found in a wicked Man? O happy were it, if the Rod of Diſcipline were better uſed; for then there wou'd be Hope of more Sobriety.

But, 2. Is this ſo, that every Sinner is a *Lunatick*? Let it then admoniſh all ſuch as are well in their Wits, to keep out of ſuch Company. Men bodily mad are kept bound and chained, and narrowly watched over, that they cannot hurt, and yet we are loth to come within their Reach: But we never fear thoſe Spiritual *Bedlams*, of whom we ought to be moſt wary, being they are at Liberty in every Place and Houſe, in moſt Companies, and ma-

many times have Power to hurt; and yet the more is the Pity, How careleſs are we of our ſelves? O! be more careful, you that love your ſelves, and ſee that you come not in their Company, nor receive them into your Houſes, unleſs Neceſſity compel: What tho' they keep within Compaſs for a time? In ſome Months, Mad-men ſeem ſober; yet firſt or laſt they will have their Fits, and may much endanger your Souls and Bodies.

The laſt Uſe ſhall be an Exhortation to ſuch as are yet in the State of Nature, to pity and pray for themſelves, that they may have their Senſes reſtor'd to them. When thou ſeeſt a *Lunatick* to rage and rave, to rend and tear his Hair and Fleſh, thou canſt not but pity and ſend forth a Prayer for him, that God would help him. Behold, O Man! thine own Eſtate, ſuch an one art thou, void of all *Senſe* and *Spiritual Underſtanding*, who doſt daily wound thine own Soul by Sin: Be as merciful to thy ſelf, as thou art to others; bewail thine own fearful State; *cry to God for help and redreſs*; never give over

over till thou art brought to thy ſelf; and being once cured, commiſerate the Eſtate of others that are not. Turn not their mad Pranks into Jeſt, as moſt do; but turn to God by Prayer for their Recovery, as but few do.

But let us now, in the next place, ſee what are the Conſiderations the *Prodigal* entertains his Thoughts upon, in this his afflicted Condition: And we ſhall find them reduceable to theſe following Heads.

1. He conſiders what the Condition was he is fallen from, and how happy he might have been, had it not been for his own Folly: *How many hired Servants of my Father have Bread enough*; &c. As if he had ſaid, I that now am pinched with Want, found none in my *Father's Houſe*; there I was liberally Maintain'd, honourably Treated, wanted nothing but the Wiſdom to underſtand my own Felicity; and in this Condition I might have continued; for neither did my Father's Eſtate complain of the Burden of my Accommodations, nor was he ſtrait-handed, or abated any thing of his *Fatherly Affection* towards

wards me: It was nothing but my own Folly ruin'd me. And then he proceeds,

2. To deplore the ſad Eſtate he was fallen into: When I ſet out from my *Father's Houſe* in queſt of Liberty, did I ever dream of becoming a Slave? When I deſpiſed the liberal Proviſions of his Family, did I, or could I have thought I ſhould come to want Bread, to feed upon Husks? How ſad is the Change! How ſevere is my Fate! which I know no more how to bear, than how to avoid. But this is not the worſt yet: For,

3. He fore-thinks what is like to be the Iſſue of this: Is it not only feeding upon Husks, but *I periſh for Hunger:* I have a Proſpect of nothing but Death before me, in the Caſe I am in. I am loſt and undone; undone in the moſt dreadful Circumſtances; I not only periſh, but it is with Hunger: Death makes his ſure Approaches; and that in a moſt ghaſtly Shape; *Vivens videnſque perco*, I ſee and feel my ſelf dying.

4. But yet in the laſt place, he looks about

about him, to ſee if there be not ſome way of Eſcape. I am dying (*ſaith he*) but not quite dead; whilſt there is Life, there is Hope; who will not catch hold of any thing, rather than periſh? And it agrees not with my Condition to ſtick at any thing that can afford me the leaſt Probability of Safety. Am not I a Son, tho' I am here a Slave? Have not I a Father? And hath he not Pity? Why then do I ſtand ſtill and die, and not rather make the utmoſt Experiment?

And here we may ſuppoſe the Prodigal thus Arguing with himſelf: Woe and alas is me! This miſerable Life, (as miſerable as it is) cannot laſt always; Death will arreſt me ſhortly, and preſent me before a juſt Tribunal: The Grave will 'ere long cover me, but not be able to conceal me; for I muſt come to Judgment. Methinks I hear already the Sound of the laſt Trumpet, *Let the Dead ariſe, let them come to Judgment*: I ſee the Angels as Apparators, gathering all the World together, and preſenting them before that dreadful Tribunal. How ſhall I be able with my guilt

guilty Conſcience to appear upon that *huge Theatre before God, Angels,* and *Men?* Methinks I ſee the Devil ſtanding at my Right Hand, to aggravate thoſe Faults which he prompted me to the Commiſſion of. I beheld the Books opened, and all the Debaucheries, Extravagancies and Follies of my whole Life laid open: *Chriſt, the Judge of all the World, coming in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance upon them that have not known him, nor obeyed his Goſpel.* How ſhall I endure his Preſence? How ſhall I eſcape his Eye? I cannot delude his Judgment, nor evade his Sentence: *Come then, ye Rocks, and fall upon me, and ye Mountains cover me from the Face of the Lamb, and from him that ſitteth upon the Throne.* But the Rocks rend in ſunder, the Sea and the Earth diſcloſe their Dead, the Earth diſſolves, the Heavens vaniſh as a Scroll, and I hear the dreadful Sentence, *Depart ye Curſed into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Methinks I hear Chriſt Jeſus thus upbraiding me: You have liſtned to the Devil, and not to me; I would have ſaved you,

but you would not be ruled by me; you have choſen the way of Death now, therefore ye ſhall be filled with your own Ways. I forewarned you what would be the Iſſue of your Courſes, but you would have your full Swing of Pleaſure for the preſent, whatever become of it hereafter: You made a Jeſt of Judgment, but it is come in Earneſt: You have had your Time of Jollity and Senſual Tranſports, and now your Portion is Weeping and Wailing, and Gnaſhing of Teeth.

But is there no Hope left? Muſt I lie down thus in Sorrow and Deſpair? Theſe Things I may juſtly expect, but they are not yet incumbent upon me. I have heard God is a Merciful God, and thereupon I preſum'd hitherto, and abuſed his Goodneſs; but ſure his *Mercies* are above the *Meaſure* of a Man, if they be infinite like Himſelf; He hath more Goodneſs than I have Ingratitude. Poſſibly there may be ſome *Hopes* left, in the midſt of all theſe *Calamities:* If there be none, it is in vain to repent, fruitleſs to weep, endleſs to bewail, Madneſs to add to my own In-

Infelicities: If there be an Irrevocable Decree paſt upon me, I will curſe God and die. But ſure whilſt there is a God, there muſt be Goodneſs; his Name ſpeaks his Nature. Will he break a bruiſed Reed? Will he contend with Duſt and Aſhes? It is true, he hath no Need of me; but for the ſame Reaſon he cannot delight in my Miſery: He cannot Repent and Change his Mind, becauſe his Wiſdom foreſaw from the *Beginning* all poſſible Contingencies. But if I Repent, and change my Mind, the ſame *Unchangeableneſs*, of his, will oblige him as well then to ſave me, as before to deſtroy me. How far he will extend Mercy, and what Inſtances he will make of it, I cannot define: But who knows but he may yet admit of my Submiſſion? However, I cannot be worſe than I am; and it is poſſible my Condition may be better. Here I periſh certainly; and if I caſt my ſelf upon his Goodneſs, I can but periſh; therefore I will try, I will ariſe and go to my Father. Thus his Deliberation brings him to Reſolution, which is the Second Stage of Repen-

tance. But ſo much ſhall ſuffice for this time.

SERMON II.

Luke xv. 18.

I will ariſe and go to my Father, and will ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee:
And am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hired Servants.

IN the former Verſe (of which we have already ſpoken) we have this *Prodigal* in his deep *Meditations: comparing Things together, and weighing them in the Ballance*: But behold, whilſt he muſed, the Fire kindled in his Boſom, and now he ſpeaks, *I will ariſe and go to my Father, and will ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned*, &c. In the Words three Things are eſpecially to be obſerved: *Firſt*, what he reſolves to do, *I will ariſe and go*. *Secondly*, To whom

whom he will go; *I will go to my Father. Thirdly,* What he will ſay when he comes thither. *Father I have ſinned,* &c.

It was high Time for the *Prodigal* to think of *returning to his Father,* when he was *Periſhing* by his Diſobedience; and had no farther, nor no other *Refuge,* but in his Father's Clemency; and ſure it is time for the Sinner to Repent, and Return to God, when (*if he be ſenſible of any thing*) he cannot but be apprehenſive that in the Courſe he is in, the *Danger* of his Eternal Ruin is as certainly impendent, as it is more intolerable. But to come to the Particulars:

Firſt, We are to conſider what he reſolves to do. *I will,* ſaith he, *ariſe and go,* &c. There is a *Three-fold Reſurrection of a Chriſtian. Firſt, Sacramental,* and ſo we riſe *again* in Baptiſm. The *Second* is *Corporeal; and ſo we ſhall riſe again in the Day of our* Lord Jeſus *in our Bodies from the Grave.* The *Third* is *Spiritual,* which is his Reſurrection in this Life in *Soul from the Death of Sin.* Thus did this *Prodigal* ariſe, and thus doth every true *Penitent* ariſe, while he here liveth on

on the Earth; from whence we may obſerve,

That Repentance from Sin, is as a Reſurrection from Death: Which is further confirmed by the Apoſtle's Words: *Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ſtand up from the Dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee Light.*

And if this be ſo, then Repentance is no ſuch eaſy Matter as the World takes it to be. The Work of Repentance is no leſs miraculous than the raiſing of the Dead. It is a Work that cannot be wrought by the Power of Nature, but ſuch a Work as muſt be wrought by the mighty Power of God.

But, 2. A Second Uſe ſhall be, to ſtir us all up thus to ariſe: For if the Soul while it is in the Body, ariſe not out of the Grave of Sin, ſure it is, the Body ſhall never riſe out of the Earth but to Shame and Confuſion. Uſe all good Means therefore, that thou mayeſt have thy Part in this firſt Reſurrection from Sin to Grace, that the ſecond Death may have no Power on thee; for otherwiſe it is impoſſible to eſcape the Power of it. By no means can'ſt thou eſcape the Torment of Hell, if thou doſt not here awake,

awake, and ſtand up from the Dead, and with *Lazarus* come forth. But to proceed.

And go.] It Was a good and holy *Motion* which he had of *Ariſing*. This he doth not quench, but cheriſhes and nouriſhes it: He adds more Fuel to this Fire begun, tho' but a Spark To the good *Motion* of *Ariſing*, he adds the ſecond of Going, which is a moving forward: When we once begin in the Way of Godlineſs, there muſt be a *Progreſſion*, a continual *going forward*. The good *Motions* of God's bleſſed *Spirit*, at any time, in any meaſure, (tho' never ſo *weak*) being once begun, are not to be choak'd, but to be cheriſh'd. When the Lord ſhall put any good *Motion* into our *Hearts*, we are to *nouriſh* and *cheriſh* the ſame. To one good Motion we muſt add a ſecond, and to that a third, and to 'em many more, and ſo fall to blowing, and not give over, until at length they break out into a comfortable *Flame* of ſerious and practical Godlineſs.

And this ſerveth as a Uſe of Reproof to condemn them that nip the *Bud* as ſoon as ever it peeps *forth*; and quench

every Spark of good that any time appeareth; yea, they wilfully ſet themſelves to repel all good *Motions*, haſtening to their wicked Companions, to chace away what they prophanely call Qualms of *Devotion*, which are indeed the ſweet Inſpirations of the Holy Spirit of God. Thus ſome will have ſome kind of Remorſe wrought in them, ſometimes upon the Hearing of a Sermon, and they ſeem to be much griev'd and perplex'd for a while; but they ſoon quench this Grief, as not being willing to torment themſelves before the times, and therefore run into what they call merry (that is *wicked* and *vain*) Company, and there *drink down Sorrow*, as not being willing to be overmuch diſquieted with this Melancholy; and ſo by quenching of thoſe good Motions loſe their Souls.

Let us therefore in the next place, be all of us admoniſhed to take head how we ſuffer that bleſſed Heat to ſlack and grow cold, which by God's Grace begins to be *kindled in our Hearts:* Suffer we not that Coal, that holy *Motion* which the Lord hath caſt into our Boſoms,

Boſoms, to die within us, but blow it up, lay on more Fewel, and daily more and more *Matter to it*, and let us tremble to loſe the leaſt Meaſure of God's gracious Gifts. To that end let us be frequent in Spiritual Exerciſes, as in Hearing Reading, Meditation, Chriſtian Conferences, Prayer, and the like. Let no Means be neglected that God hath ordained for the working of our Eſtabliſhment.

But from theſe Words [*I will ariſe and go*] a *Second Doctrine* may be gather'd; which is this: Where *Spiritual Life* and a new Birth is once begun, there will be a Growth and an Increaſe of Grace. There will be no ſtanding at a Stay, but a proceeding forward by Degrees.

And this may *ſerve very well* for every one of us to examine ourſelves by, and ſee what *Growth* of Grace there is in us, what Increaſe of Faith, Love, Patience Zeal, and what ſtrengthning of the inner Man Grace doth beget every Day more than other, till it grow to ſome *Bigneſs*? Doth it ſhoot up in Tallneſs and Stature? Surely then it is out of queſtion that Grace is true Grace, and that thou

thou art made Partaker of the New Birth. But doth it remain ſtill Infant-like and feeble, without any ſtirring or ſhewing of it ſelf; then haſt thou cauſe to fear it is but a Counterfeit, and not true Grace indeed: The Withering of the Blade, is a ſhrew'd Sign of a Stony Ground.

This may alſo ſerve to reprove ſuch as ſtand at a ſtay, and do not go forward, but are like the *George* on Horſeback, ever riding, but are not a Step further: Where you leave them this Year, there you may find 'em the next. This is a fearful and moſt uncomfortable Thing.

In the Third Place, let this admoniſh every one to grow in Grace. Let us forget that which is behind, and preſs forward to that which is before, *Let us preſs forward toward the Mark, for the Prize of the High Calling of GOD in Chriſt Jeſus.* Let us not be evermore as ſmoaking Flax, or as bruiſed Reeds; but let the Flame of our *Warmth* to God break forth into a compleat Victory over all our Corruption.

Obſerve we next whom it is that this *Prodigal* addreſſes himſelf to in his Re-

turn

turn home: And that is his Father.

I will ariſe and go to my Father.] From which we may learn, that Relief in any ſad and deplorable Condition is to be ſought for from GOD alone. Therefore this ſharply reproves thoſe that betake themſelves to any other Help in time of Trouble or Adverſity; for our Help is in the Lord, for vain is the Help of Man: For to appeal to Saints or Angels, or uſe any other unlawful Means for our *Deliverance*, is very bad. This was King *Ahaziah*'s Sin, who being ſick, ſent *Meſſengers*, and ſaid unto 'em, *Go and enquire of* Baal-zebub, *the God of* Ekron, *whether I ſhall recover of this Diſeaſe?* Contrary to the Command of God, *Regard not them that have familiar Spirits, neither ſeek after Wizards to be defiled by them, I am the Lord your God.*

Secondly, Let this teach Us, who have any regard for the Welfare of our precious and immortal Souls, to ſeek to him that is mighty, and able to ſave to the utmoſt all that come to GOD by him, from the Miſeries of this Life, and the Torments of the next; and beware of truſting to any other *Means* that God has ap-

appointed: It is lawful to ſeek to the Phyſician, and to make uſe of his Means, but to truſt to the Phyſician's Help more than in God, is very dangerous and ſinful.

And ſay unto him Father.] The Prodigal there doth conſider what he ſhould ſay, when he comes into his Father's *Preſence*; for as yet he was not. From whoſe Example we ought to learn to be very careful how we approach or come into God's Preſence, who is *Maker* of Heaven and Earth, without a due Preparation, and conſider well what to ſay, what to ſeek, and what you want before you ſpeak.

Be not raſh (ſays the Wiſe Man) *with thy Mouth, and let not thy Heart be haſty to utter any Thing before God.* We muſt confer with our Hearts, or commune with them, and prepare them fit for God's Service, before we preſume to come into his *Preſence*. To this doth the Prophet *Hoſea* ſeem to exhort us, *Take to you Words, and turn to the Lord, and ſay unto him.* And ſo our Saviour in his Direction for Prayer, ſets not down the Petitions abrupt, but beginneth with a ſolemn Preface,

Preface, to ſhew before we enter upon this great and important Duty, we muſt diſpoſe ourſelves, and compoſe our *Affections* for the ſame, as the *Pſalmiſt* hath it. *Pſ.*108. *ver.* 1. *O God my Heart is fixed, I will ſing and give Praiſe unto thee with my Glory.* And again, *Pſal.*57. *My Heart is fixed, I will ſing and give praiſe unto thee.*

And the Reaſon why we humble our ſelves ſo, when we come before the Moſt High; for as *Solomon* ſaith, *God is in Heaven,* and if he ſhould ſay, God is full of *Majeſty and Wiſdom*; God is both Lord and Judge, it is not a Man, or any earthly Power you have to do with, but that *great and glorious God,* who hath the Angels to attend him, and a Thouſand times Ten Thouſand adminiſtring unto him, at whoſe Feet all the Kings of the Earth caſt down their *Crowns* and *Scepters*: And we are upon the Earth *weak and unwiſe,* and unworthy Creatures, leſs than nothing before him, who fills *Heaven and Earth*; therefore it becomes us not to ſpeak unto him, but with the greateſt Fear, Reverence and Reſpect imaginable. And this ſerves to reprove many who ruſh into God's *Preſence* without

without any Preparations at all, or due Meditation of what they are to ask or crave at his Hand. Small is the Number of ſuch as do pray, but far ſmaller, I doubt, is the Number of them that prepare themſelves a-right for Prayer.

And alſo this ſhould admoniſh us to prepare our ſelves before we come to appear before the Lord, to call upon his Name, whether in Publick or Private. You *know* good and ſtately Buildings have, to be ſure, a *magnificent* Gate or Entrance; and Great Perſons have ſeemly Uſhers to go before them, who by their uncovered Heads command Reverence and Way. So ſhould holy Duties be undertaken, you may ſee, *Exod.* 19. 10, 11. *The Lord ſaid unto* Moſes, *Go unto the People, and ſanctify 'em to Day and to Morrow; Let 'em waſh their Cloaths, and be ready againſt the Third Day; for on the Third Day the Lord will come down in the Sight of all the People in Mount* Sinai. So much for that Point.

Now we are to ſpeak of the Words themſelves, which he without doubt did not ſpeak, without great Conſideration.

Father, I have ſinned, &c.] In theſe Words

Words of his *Acknowledgment* we may ſee more eſpecially what troubled him moſt, and touched him to the *Quick*, (namely this) that he had ſo groſly *abus'd* the great Love and Kindneſs of ſo good and ſo tender a Father. It was his Senſibleneſs of his Ingratitude, made him inſiſt ſo much upon the *Name* (*of Father,*) *I will go to my Father; I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and againſt Thee.* The Miſeries he was in, as his want of Bread, and all the reſt of the Comforts of this Life, doubtleſs to Him was very ſad and grievous; yet all this was not ſo *great* a Trouble to him, or lay ſo heavy upon his Spirit, as his Undutifulneſs to ſo gracious and good a Father.

Let us note this by the way, That *nothing* lies ſo heavy upon a true Penitent that is thoroughly convicted, as this, That he hath been ſo *great an Offender*, and Rebel againſt ſo *good a* GOD, ſo gracious a *Father*, that gives, of his infinite *Goodneſs* and *Bounty*, all that he doth enjoy, or deſire to enjoy.

This was that which moſt troubled *David*, and went neareſt to his Heart, that he had ſinned againſt the LORD, and

and offended his Majesty, by committing of Evil: *Against thee only have I sinned, and done this Evil in thy sight.*

The *Reason* of this the Apostle St. *Paul* giveth, *They have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but they have receiv'd the Spirit of Adoption:* Which *Spirit* doth make them love the Lord, and fear to offend, and exceedingly grieve when he is offended; as it is with a true Lover towards his Beloved.

Now for some Use.

First, We may see a great Difference between the Sorrow of the Godly and that of the Wicked; both grieve, both mourn; *Ahab* as well as *David*; *Judas* as well as *Peter*; yet the Sorrow of the one is godly, *and bringeth Life*; the Sorrow of the other worldly, *and bringeth Death.*

Therefore for your further *Information,* if you do truly grieve as you ought, it will be thus: *First,* You will grieve for all your Sins, Original and Actual; of *Ignorance* and *Knowledge*; of *Omission* and *Commission,* and Secret, and Open, for little Sins as well as for great; Whatsoever is Sin you will mourn

mourn for, becauſe God's Law is *broken by it*, and his Majeſty offended.

Secondly, If you *grieve* becauſe God is offended, then will you *grieve* alſo for the Sins of others as well as for your own, becauſe God is diſhonour'd by the one as well as by the other.

Thirdly, If your Sorrow for Sin be a true Sorrow, it will be a Sorrow proportionable to your Sin, as we may ſee in *Manaſſeh*'s, *his Sin was great*, and ſo was his Contrition, 2 *Chron.* 33. 12. *And when he was in Affliction he beſought the Lord his God, and humbled himſelf greatly before the God of his Father, and prayed unto him, and he was intreated of him, and heard his Supplications, and brought him again to* Jeruſalem *into his Kingdom: Then* Manaſſeh *knew that the Lord he was God.* So in *Peter*, his Sorrow was great for denying his Maſter, *Matth.* 26. 75 *And* Peter *remembred the Words of Jeſus, which ſaid unto him, before the Cock crow, thou ſhalt deny me thrice: And he went out and wept bitterly.*

Fourthly, If your Sorrow be godly for Sin, as it is an offence to God, you will

will desire them to be rid of Sin more than any other Trouble whatever; yea, as heartily desirous never to commit it, as you would be desirous that God should never impute it.

Furthermore, this may serve to reprove those who rest in a counterfeit and unsound Repentance, who do not return to the Lord with all their Hearts. For doth a true Penitent grieve more for God's Cause than his own? Is he more grieved for the offence against God than for any manner of Respect to himself? Then surely such must be far from true Repentance, who, were it not for Fear, or Shame, would be content to live in Sin, and take *Pleasure* in it all their Days.

But to proceed, [*And before thee*] that is, in thy Sight, as afterward, *v.* 21. This did add much to this Prodigal's *Sorrow*, and did much *aggravate his Fault*. Two things are here observable: First, That God's Eye is on all Men's Actions. The second is, The forgetting of God's *All-seeing*, when we are committing of *Evil*, doth *aggravate the Sin*, and increase the same. *First*, God is every where present, he can be shut out of no Place, as Man

Man can, or the Sun may; becauſe of his Immenſity: *Do not I fill Heaven and Earth? ſaith the Lord: Am I a GOD at hand, and not afar off?* Therefore it cannot otherwiſe be, he muſt needs behold all our Actions, as you may ſee in the 139th *Pſalm*, and 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12th Verſes, *Whither ſhall I go from thy Spirit, or whither ſhall I flee from thy Preſence? If I aſcend up to Heaven, thou art there? If I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there; If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt Parts of the Sea, even there ſhall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand ſhall hold me; if I ſay ſurely the Darkneſs ſhall cover me, even the Night ſhall be light about me; yea, the Darkneſs hideth not from thee, but the Night ſhineth as the Day, the Darkneſs and Light are both alike to thee.*

Secondly, It is He that made the Eye, and ſhall he not ſee? And he that made the Ear, and ſhall he not hear? He giveth Knowledge, and ſhall he not know? Can any thing be hid from him from whom they have their *Being*? The Work is known unto the Worker, the Art unto the Artificer, the Pot unto the Potter, and ſhall not the Creature be know by his Creator? It

It is he that *chaſtiſeth the Nations*, as the Prophet ſpeaks; ſhall not he correct? He is our Judge, and every one ſhall be judged by him according to his *Works*. Now altho' he ſhall not want *Witneſſes* in that *great and terrible Day*, yet it is *fitting he ſhould have Knowledge of all Men's Actions*, ſeeing he will not reprove after the *Hearing of his Ears*, Iſa. 11. 2, 3. *And the Spirit of the Lord ſhall reſt upon him, the Spirit of Wiſdom and Underſtanding, the Spirit of Counſel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge, and of the Fear of the Lord; and ſhall make him of quick Underſtanding in the Fear of the Lord, and he ſhall not judge after the ſight of his Eye.*

Theſe few Reaſons may ſuffice. Now for ſome Uſes.

Uſe the Firſt. This may ſerve for Terror to all thoſe that boldly go on and live in Sin, that have not God in all *their Thoughts, that deſire not the Knowledge of his Ways.* And *if the Righteous ſhall ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Wicked and the Ungodly appear?* They muſt call to the *Rocks* and *Mountains* to fall upon them, to hide them from the dreadful Preſence of the Lord, and from the Glory

Glory of his Majesty, when he comes to *shake* terribly the Earth. What *greater Terror can it be to the Wicked*, than for the Lord to see, know, and take Cognizance of all their wicked Doings. Oh! *think* of these Things, you that *lurk* in Dens to do Mischief, you Enemies of the Church, *whose sleep departs from you, till you have caused some to fall.* The Lord seeth your Plots and cunning Devices against his Church and People: *But he that sitteth in the Heaven shall laugh you to scorn, the Lord shall have you in Derision.*

Take notice of this you Whoremongers and Adulterers, who say in your Hearts, *Who seeth us? We are compassed about with Darkness*, we need not fear. Behold the Lord thy Judge seeth thy Villany, *and looketh thee in the Face in the very Act doing.*

Use Second. This serveth to set forth God's *wonderful Patience* and *Long-suffering*: Is all Sin in his Eye? Can nothing be done upon *Earth* but he *sees* or *knows it*? Then let us *magnify* God's infinite *Mercy and Forbearance, who seeing* so many and outragious Sins daily committed

mitted againſt his Honour and Glory, and yet for all that, ſpares us? Some ſwearing, ſome cheating, ſome lying, ſome whoring, ſome thieving, and what not, and his Eye upon 'em all the time? All our *Impurities* and *Impieties* he plainly doth behold, yet he forbears, and doth not ſtrike; deſigning by this his gracious Favour, to move us to Repentance.

Uſe the Third. This may ſerve to ſtir us up, and encourage us in *Well-doing*, for he is a good Rewarder of 'em that diligently ſeek him. What lazy Servant will not do his beſt, and put forth his Strength to the utmoſt, when his Maſter's Eye is upon him? So, who is he, that being fully perſuaded that the Lord ſees all his *Doings*, would not put forth the beſt of his *Strength* to the Work of the Lord, and ſerve him with all his Heart, and all his Mind, with all his Soul, and with all his Strength; knowing alſo the great *Rewards* that are promiſed thoſe, *whoſe Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither can it enter into the Heart of Man, to conceive what God has prepared for all thoſe that love him, and long for his Appearing?*

Ano-

Another Doctrine to be learned from hence, is this: That the forgetting of God's *All-seeing Eye*, when committing of Evil, doth *aggravate the Sin*, and increaſe the Shame: And the Reaſons are theſe: *Firſt*, We Sin againſt thoſe Means that ought to keep us from Sin, and this doth *aggravate* the Sin exceedingly, and make Sin out of Meaſure ſinful. *Secondly*, We rob God of his Honour, and give not that unto him which is his Right; we would pluck out his Eyes, that he ſhould not ſee, or at leaſt as bad, think him to be blind; to think God ſeeth us not, is a kind of Atheiſm, for in a manner we deny him to be God.

And am no more worthy to be called thy Son.] In which Words you may plainly ſee, what a good Reſolution he had made to humble himſelf, when he came to his Father; ſays he, I am not worthy to be thy Son, nay, not of the Name of a Son; *make me as one of thy hir'd Servants*, and I ſhall think my ſelf moſt happy. O rare and excellent Humility! becauſe greatly neceſſary, becauſe God is good to ſuch, and only ſuch as are truly

truly humble before him, but as for the Proud, he beholds them with an Eye of Scorn afar off.

But come to the Point, and this it is, Where there is a true, hearty, and ſincere *Repentance*, as may never be repented of; there is a *Sight* and *Senſe* of a Man's own Unworthineſs: And it ſtands with *good Reaſon*, for the Affection muſt needs follow the Temperature of the Mind; ſo that as the Conceit of *Holineſs* and *Happineſs* doth puff a Man up with *Spiritual Pride*; ſo a true *Sight* and *Senſe* of his ſinful *State* and *Condition*, muſt needs caſt him down with Shame and Sorrow.

Let us then examine our Repentance by our Humility. *Haſt thou truly repented?* Then thou art truly humbled with a *Sight and Senſe* of thy Sins and Tranſgreſſions. And it is ſadly to be lamented and feared, that there is but little true Repentance amongſt the Sons of Men, ſince there is ſo little Humiliation for Sin.

This may ſerve to reprove thoſe that have not this low and mean Eſteem of themſelves, but think better of themſelves

ſelves then they ought: Let all ſuch know that they have receiv'd the *Grace of God* in vain; *And behold*, ſays the Prophet, *his Soul that is lifted up is not upright within him.* All thoſe that are not cloathed with Humility, are far from Uprightneſs; the higher the Sun, the ſhorter the Shadow; the emptieſt Veſſel ever ſounds loudeſt; Wood that is burning makes the greateſt Smoak, commonly gives the ſmalleſt Heat. Thoſe Boughs which are moſt laden with Fruit, and thoſe Ears that are fulleſt of Corn, do ever bend downwards; when the barren Bough and empty Ear ſtand upright. So thoſe that make not a right and good Uſe of that meaſure of Grace that God has given them, are oftentimes ſpiritually proud, and boaſt moſt of their Goodneſs.

But ſays the poor *Prodigal*, *Make me as one of thy hired Servants*; as if he had ſaid, I will not preſume, I dare not deſire to be as before I was: A Son! No, I am unworthy of ſo great a Favour: Yet, I beſeech thee, grant me this Favour, that I may be as one of thy Hired Servants; let me be any thing, ſo

I may have but Room and Place in thy Houſe, if it be but as the meaneſt Servant. Here we may ſee how the Caſe is altered: When he was in the Houſe before, he was a Son, then nothing was too good for him; but ſince he has been in a far Country, and wanted thoſe good Things his Father's Servants did enjoy, his Heart and his Deſires are changed; now let him but be one of the loweſt of his Servants, and he will think himſelf very happy.

From hence we may learn, That God's Bleſſings are better known, and more eſteemed by the wanting of them than by enjoying of them; the Worth and Excellency of God's good Bleſſings are not known unto us till we are without them. Thus Viſion was precious in the Days of *Eli*; and the Prophet *Iſaiah* tells the People of *Iſrael*, That *the Bleſſings of the* LORD *ſhould be excellent and pleaſant to them, after they had been pinched with the want of them in their Captivity*; *Yea the Bud ſhall then be beautiful*, &c.

The Uſe of this (in a word) is to teach us to eſteem more the Bleſſings we

we receive from God, and beware of undervaluing them, leſt we give the Lord occaſion to deprive us of them. Theſe common Bleſſings of the ſhining of the Sun, breathing in the Air, *Meat*, *Drink*, *Apparel*, *Preſervation* in our goings out and comings in, the uſe of our *Senſe*, *Health of Body*, and the like, let them be more eſteem'd by us, and let us always have thankful Hearts for 'em. Alas! how miſerable ſhould we be without theſe Comforts! The Lord is obliged ſometimes, (ſo great is his Mercy and our Corruption) for our Good to with-hold ſome of theſe Comforts from us, that we might know the Uſefulneſs and Excellency of them by the Want of them; as Hunger is good Sauce, and gives a good Flavour and Reliſh to courſe Meats and homely Fair, when as the full Soul loaths the Honey and the Honey-comb. When we want *Health*, *Strength*, *Senſe* or *Sleep* for ſome time, O how precious and good are they to us, when God out of his infinite Mercy is pleaſed to reſtore them to us again! O how joyful of them and thankful for them are we!

And he aroſe and came to his Father, &c. This *Prodigal* puts in practice what he juſt before had reſolved to do: Wherein we have the two Parts of *Repentance*; Firſt, his Averſion from Sin, *He aroſe*. Secondly, his Converſion to God, *And came to his Father*. His ariſing is nothing elſe but his leaving of Sin; and his coming to his Father, his turning to the Lord. From whence we may note, where there is true Repentance, there is a riſing from Sin, there is a leaving and forſaking all former evil Ways, and wicked Courſes: This is plainly ſeen in many Inſtances in Scripture; as in St. *Paul*, St. *Peter Zaccheus*, and many others, who left their evil Ways, to cleave only to that which was good.

Firſt, Hereby we may know whether our Repentance be real, or no: Hath it wrought a thorough Change in the Affections, Words and Actions? Are all old things done away, and new come in the Place thereof? Is there a forſaking of Sin, a thorough Reformation of Life? If it be thus, then it is well with thee; for thus it is with every true *Penitent*.

Secondly,

Secondly, This may ſerve for Terror to ſuch as find not this Change in themſelves; for where this is wanting, there can be no true Repentance, but you are the ſame as ever you were; it cannot be ſaid of you as St. *Paul* ſaid of the *Corinthians*, *Such were ſome of you: but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified*, &c. but ſuch are you, and ſo continue unchanged; Adulterers, Drunkards, Covetous ye were, and are ſo ſtill; you are as profane as proud, as worldly, as irreligious as ever, if not worſe than ever.

Thirdly, This may ſerve for Comfort to all ſuch as do find this bleſſed Change wrought in them. They are *turned from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God:* Who can ſay as that blind Man that had his Sight reſtored? *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now ſee:* Whereas I was unclean and filthy, I am now waſhed and purified: O happy Eſtate, and bleſſed Condition that thou art in! Only let me admoniſh thee to manifeſt thy Change alſo to the World; that they ſeeing thy good Works, may glorify thy Heavenly Fa-

ther, that has wrought this Change in thee. St. *Ambroſe* reports of a young Man, who had lived in the Practice of gratifying his Luſts, and had committed many heinous Sins; but afterwards was converted in his Travels; and returning home, he met with one of his old Acquaintance, with whom he had been very often over familiar: He paſſed by, and made as if he did not ſee her. She wondring that he ſo ſlighted her, went to him, and ſaid, *How now! What, have you forgotten me? It is I. I know it,* ſaid he, *but I am not I; I am not the Man I was, therefore I have nothing to ſay to you or do with you.* So it becomes all true Converts, to ſhew forth in their Life and Converſation that Change, which it has pleaſed God to work in them: that thoſe who were Witneſſes of their Sin may be alſo Witneſſes of Repentance.

How then are they to be condemn'd, who, tho' they own that there muſt be ſuch a Change and Turning, yet turn from bad to worſe, from one Sin to another? For inſtance, many turn from Profuſeneſs and Prodigality to Covetouſneſs

touſneſs, from ſwearing to cheating and cozening, from *Atheiſm* and Profaneneſs to Superſtition; What Hope can theſe have, who are ſo far from true Repentance? This highly concerns thoſe who were (at leaſt ſeem'd) once zealous in carrying on the *Work of the Lord*, to the Edification of others, but are now become Backſliders and Apoſtates. Let them attentively hearken to the Admonition given to the Church at *Epheſus*, *Rev.* 2. 5. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the firſt Works, or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candleſtick out of his place, except thou repent.*

Let this alſo warn us all, that our Turning be a true Turning; and as with this *Prodigal* we have gone by Sin from our Father's Houſe, ſo let us ariſe, and with him ſet our Faces Heavenward. This *Prodigal* after he had once made a Reſolution, ſtands not debating, but forthwith he aroſe and went his way. When he had receiv'd the Call of God in his Conſcience, he does not conſult Fleſh and Blood, but obeys immediately the heavenly Voice. By this we may

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ſee that the Work of Repentance muſt be ſet about without Delay; we muſt ſet about it in good earneſt, as ſoon as ever God touches our Hearts with a Coal from his Altar. God ever requires the Firſt Fruits, he muſt be ſerved above and before all. Then let this reprove the great Folly and Madneſs of thoſe that defer their Repentance from Day to Day. They are often called to return and repent, and they have many Opportunities put into their hands, if they had but an heart to embrace them: But alas! inſtead of this they often ſay, I have time enough to repent: Why tell you me of Repentance as yet? Is not God merciful? Did not he ſhew Mercy to the Thief on the Croſs at the laſt Hour? Do not we read of ſome that were called at the Eleventh Hour, who were rewarded with the ſame Penny with thoſe that were hired at the Third Hour, and had born the Heat and Burthen of the Day: And with ſuch kind of Arguments they ſtrengthen themſelves againſt all the Calls and Monitions they meet with from God, either in his Word or Providence. But

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it would much better become them, to reflect upon the uncertainty of Life, and the ſhortneſs of it at beſt: That tho' God had been graciouſly pleas'd to promiſe Pardon to Returning Sinners, yet he will have no Mercy on preſuming Sinners: That the Inſtance of the Thief on the Croſs, is but a ſingle Example, given (probable) only to keep Men from Deſpair, and ſo ought not to be drawn into Precedent: And that the Parable of thoſe that were hired at the ſixth and ninth, and eleventh Hours, ſignifies no more than that thoſe who never before heard the Call of the Goſpel ſhall be accepted even in very old Age, toward the latter End of their Life, if then they take upon them the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and conform their Practice to the Rules thereof. So that there is no Reaſon why they ſhould any longer put off their Repentance and turning to God.

But when he was yet a great way off, he ſaw him.] Altho' this is put here in the laſt place, it is ſuppos'd by moſt of our Expoſitors, that it was the firſt Mover, and refers to the beginning of his Con-

verſion. It was this gracious Look when he was yet afar off; that brought this *Prodigal* home to his *Father*. He look'd upon him with an Eye of Pity and Compaſſion, and infuſed into him ſecretly his Efficacious Grace, and pierc'd his Heart with the Beams of his Spirit, which ſo prevail'd with him, that it brought him to Repentance: Thus it was with St. *Peter*, who after he had ſinned by thrice denying his Lord, remained obdurate and impenitent, till by a Look, our Saviour penetrated his Heart, and awaken'd him out of that Lethargick Fit; *and* then *he went out and wept bitterly.*

By this it appears, that the *Converſion of a Sinner* is an Effect of the Free Grace of God. By *Grace ye are ſaved*, was the Language of the *Holy Spirit*; and our Lord himſelf ſays, *No Man can come unto me except the Father draw him.* Many eminent Examples might be brought to confirm this, both of the *Unregenerate* before their *Converſion*, and the *Regenerate* in their Falls after *Converſion*. What Diſpoſition was in St. *Paul* to ſather his *Converſion*? Was he not breathing

breathing out *Threatnings* and *Slaughters* againſt the *People of God*, and the Diſciples of *Jeſus Chriſt*? Had he not procured a Commiſſion from the *High Prieſt*, to bind and impriſon all that were of that Way? Yet God beheld him afar off; as alſo he did *Matthew* at the Receipt of *Cuſtom*, *Zaccheus* the Uſurer, *Mary* the Sinner, and Us *Gentiles*, *when we were*, as St. *Paul* ſays, *without Hope, without God in the World, Strangers to the Covenant of Promiſe, and Aliens to the Commonwealth of Iſrael.* So that a Sinner may be aptly likened to an Eccho, he cannot ſpeak firſt to God, but muſt anſwer to a Voice from God. And it cannot be otherwiſe, becauſe we are *dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks: So the Father of this Prodigal ſays, *For this my Son was dead and is alive again.* Whilſt we are *Unregenerate*, we have no *ſpiritual Life*, and can no more work our own *Converſion* than *Lazarus* could ariſe and come forth before Chriſt call'd him. This then may ſerve to check our Pride, and teach us not to aſcribe that to our ſelves, which is the Work of God alone; let it humble us, and make

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us to have mean Thoughts of ourſelves. There is a ſtrict Truth in thoſe Words of our Saviour, *Without me ye can do nothing*, that is good and acceptable in the Sight of God: And if any one does any good thing, he may ſay as the Apoſtle, *Yet not I, but the Grace of God that dwelleth in me.* And if we have any good thing, it is nothing but what we have received from our gracious God, whether it appertaineth to this Life, or that which is to come.

Therefore let this oblige all of us, eſpecially thoſe who have any Signs and Tokens of their Converſion to the Lord, to give unto him the Praiſe and Glory that is due to him for the ſame; *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name be the Glory; it is becauſe of thy never failing Compaſſions, that we are not conſumed.* It is of his infinite Mercy, not of our Deſerts, that we are at this time living Monuments of his Patience and Forbearance. If we have repented and turned to God, what is the difference between us and Reprobates? Or at leaſt, who made us to differ, but He that made us? Not from any foreſeen good, he

he did not find any good thing in us, but gave it us of his Free Grace and Bounty. How then ſhould we be rapt up in Love to God on the conſideration of his Love to us. Let us therefore take to ourſelves Words and ſay, *Let the people praiſe thee, O God; yea, let all the people praiſe thee: for thou alone art worthy of it, henceforth and for evermore.*

And ran.] Behold here the readineſs of this Father to receive his penitent Child! The one cannot be more willing to return, than the other is to receive. So quick-ſighted is Love, that he ſaw him a great way off; and ſeeing him, he did not ſtay till he came to him, but his Love adds Wings to his Feet, and Celerity to his Age, ſo that he ran to meet him. Hence we may learn, that God is always ready to receive returning and repenting Sinners, and ſhew Mercy to them; for his Mercy is over all his Works, and he is ever ready to forgive, as he is a God gracious and merciful, ſlow to Anger, and of great Kindneſs, and repenteth himſelf of the Evil he had threatned.

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For Man is God's Workmanſhip, and his Delight is with the Sons of Men; therefore he is moſt ready and willing to receive all that forſake their Sins and ſeek him, and implore his Mercy; ſo that this may ſerve to encourage thoſe who are even at the point of Deſpair; for in him is infinite Mercy and plenteous Redemption.

And is it ſo? Have we ſo gracious and merciful a God to deal with, who is always ready to forgive every true Penitent? Then let none lay the Fault at God's Door if they periſh in their Sins; for God is ready and deſirous to forgive, as we may ſee by his Language in *Iſaiah* 1. 16, 17, 18. where he reaſons the caſe with his People. *Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek Judgment, relieve the Oppreſſed, Judge the Fatherleſs, plead for the Widow. Come now and let us reaſon together, ſaith the LORD: Though your Sins be as Scarlet, they ſhall be White as Snow; tho' they be red like Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool.* God does often call upon us to turn from our evil Ways, that ſo Iniquity might

might not be our Ruin, but that we might be eternally bleſt with the Preſence and Fruition of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*.

Further, Seeing GOD is ſo ready to ſhew Mercy to every one that ſeeks it, let this be as a Spur or Goad in our ſides to entreat him to forgive us our Sin: And certainly he will not be wanting to us, if we are not ſo to our ſelves. Let us alſo learn to be herein like our *Heavenly Father*, in being as ready to forgive Others as he is to forgive Us: It may be ſomebody has wrong'd us, or done us ſome great Injuries; yet we muſt forgive them, and that heartily too. Why then is there ſo much ſuing for Pardon and Reconciliation, before it can be obtained? We ſhould remember that we pray to God to *forgive us our Treſpaſſes, as* (or on condition, or in the ſame manner as) *we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us.*

Moreover, we find here the Son coming to ſubmit himſelf to his Father, and the Father *running* to *receive* and *forgive* his *Son*; which teaches us, that God is more ready to ſhew Mercy, than penitent

tent Sinners are to ſue for it: The one come *ſoftly*, the other *ſwiftly*.

Here take notice of God's wonderful Love: who tho' he is the Party that is offended; yet is more ready to forgive than the Offender to ſeek and beg Pardon!

And he fell on his Neck and kiſſed him.] Here is a joyful Meeting between ſo good a Father and his Returning Son. Mercy and Truth are met together and kiſs each other: Truth in the Prodigal, for he diſſembled not; and Mercy in the Father, for he fell on his Neck and kiſſed him.

By theſe Circumſtances the Heat and Fire of his Affection is declar'd, and his entire Love to his Son is expreſſed. A Kiſs hath ever been eſteemed as a Pawn or a Pledge of Kindneſs from him that kiſſeth, to him that is kiſſed. By this Token the primitive Chriſtians uſed to expreſs their Love to one another: Even till the time of *Juſtin Martyr*, it was in uſe before they approached the Table of the Lord, thereby teſtifying their hearty Love and Reconciliation one to another; and this (probably)

bably) was what we read of by the name of a *Holy Kiſs*. Beſides this, it was (and is to this Day) accounted a Ceremony of Civility and Affection: Thus *Joſeph* when he bleſſed his Brethren, *fell on their Necks and kiſſed them.* Thus alſo *Judas* the Traitor made ſome ſhew of Kindneſs, when he kiſs'd his Maſter, tho' he did it with a nefandous Intent to betray him. When the Church in the *Canticles* ſues to her Spouſe, to ſhew his Love to her, ſhe intreats him to *kiſs her with the kiſſes of his Mouth.* Thus the Father kiſſed his penitent Son, thereby ſealing and confirming his good will and Love towards him, ſo that he need not doubt of it. Anſwerable to this, God often does manifeſt his Love to his Children by evident Signs and Tokens, upon their Converſion and Turning to him. For were it not ſo, how could we be affected with it? What is a blind Man the better for knowing that the Sun is a glorious Creature, while he cannot ſee ſo much as one Beam of its Light? So, what is a Man benefited by knowing that God is infinite in Love, except he alſo knows that he is a Perſon beloved by

by him, and has ſome feeling of it in his Soul.

If therefore it be true, that God does not only love his Children, but many times demonſtrates his Love to them by Signs and Tokens, then we may ſee the Falſhood of that Doctrine taught by the Church of *Rome*, That none can be certain that they are Objects of the Love and Favour of God: And tho' ſome may hope well, none can have a real Aſſurance.

This may alſo ſerve for the great Comfort and Eſtabliſhment of thoſe, that have *God's Love* manifeſted to them. For as great as the Trouble and Terror is wherewith that Man's Conſcience is ſeized, who doubts of the Love and Favour of *Almighty God*; ſo great and much greater, is the Comfort wherewith that Man is poſſeſſed, who has attained to a bleſſed Hope, and full Aſſurance of God's Love towards him. For then he is fitted for any Service God ſhall have for him to do in this World; for he is then capable of ſaying with the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 8. 38, 39. *I am perſuaded that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor*

nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the Love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.

But I muſt proceed to the next Verſe.

And the Son ſaid unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son. Now we come more particularly to the Words which are a Confeſſion of Sin, made by the Prodigal to his Father; wherein obſerve the Matter and the Manner of his Confeſſion.

The Matter; *I have ſinned*

The Manner; *againſt Heaven and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son*; which is a circumſtantial Aggravation, and an Humiliation.

This may teach us, That God will not forgive Us our Sins, till we confeſs them. Thus we read in St. *John* 1. 8, 9. *If we ſay we have no Sin, we deceive ourſelves -- But if we confeſs our Sins, God is faithful and juſt to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanſe us from all Unrighteouſneſs* God has bound himſelf by his Word no'

not to ſpare thoſe who do not confeſs their Sins. So ſaith *Solomon*, *He that hideth his Sins ſhall not proſper: But whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them ſhall have Mercy.*

By this it appears that all who deſire to have their Sins pardoned, muſt confeſs them, for without Confeſſion there is no Remiſſion. And it is highly neceſſary that we ſhould leave no Sin unconfeſſed, that we would not have unpardoned: We muſt alſo look to it, that our Confeſſion be ſuch as God requires. If it be ſuch as that of *Pharoah*, *Saul*, *Judas*, &c. it will avail us no more than theirs did them: And if we expect to have better Succeſs than they had, we muſt ſee that our Confeſſion be better than theirs was.

We may likewiſe obſerve to whom this Confeſſion is to be made; and that is to God. The Reaſons for it may be theſe; becauſe whatever Damage is done to Men by our Sins, the greateſt Diſhonour is to God, in the Breach of his Righteous Laws: Becauſe it is God only has the Power of forgiving Sins: And

And becauſe *Confeſſion of Sin* is a ſpecial Part of *Divine Worſhip.*

Beſides this, a *Confeſſion of Sin made to Man* is ſometimes neceſſary, either on account of the Injury done to a ſingle Perſon; and then it muſt be a private Confeſſion. Or when a Perſon is charged with Sin by the *Church*; and then he is to confeſs publickly, that ſuch his Confeſſion may take away all Offence. But farther,

Let us now conſider the Manner of this *Prodigal's Confeſſion.* He does not plead the Vanity of Youth, and the Proneneſs of his Nature to do Evil; he does not go about to extenuate his Guilt; but on the other Hand, he relates it with the moſt aggravating Circumſtances, and he exaggerates it to the third Degree: 1 *I have ſinned*: 2. *Againſt Heaven*: And 3. *In thy Sight.* Thus, to break a lawful Command of a Magiſtrate, tho thro' Ignorance, is a Fault; to do it knowingly and wilfully is yet a greater Crime; but to do it ſo, and in his Sight and Preſence too, argues the utmoſt Contempt.

If then a true *Penitent* is ſo qualified, that he will lay as much as he can to his own Charge, what ſhall we think or ſay of thoſe that ſtudy how to extenuate their Sin? They can enlarge upon the Sins of others; they have both the Will and Skill to expatiate upon the Failings and Infirmities of their Enemies, and many times make their Faults appear much greater than they really are. But as for their own Sins, they do all they can to leſſen them, and oftentimes they deny them when they are charged with them.

As *Aggravation* is a commendable Circumſtance of *Confeſſion*, ſo alſo we muſt come before the *Almighty* with Humility of Soul. As the Waters always flow to the loweſt Grounds, which are well watered thereby; ſo alſo the humbleſt Soul is the fitteſt Recipient of Grace, and retains it beſt. The likelieſt Means to be exalted by God, is to come before him in *Lowlineſs of Spirit*; and God has promiſed to *look* in *Mercy* on ſuch. The full Veſſel can receive no Liquor, and the proud Soul is not capable of receiving Grace. Pride is above

above all other Sins, deservedly called the Devil's First-born; and as it is his particular Sin, so it was the first Poison he put into our Natures: And as the Servants of *Christ*, and the Children of God, are known by their Charity and Humility; so the Servants of Sin, and the Sons of *Satan* are distinguished by their Pride and Cruelty. Humility is an heavenly Grace, disposing a Person both inwardly and outwardly, towards God and Man, to all Acts of Lowliness, in Thoughts, Words, and Deeds. Humility is an adorning Grace, 1 *Pet.* 5. 5. *Be ye cloathed with Humility:* The Word ἐγκομβώσασθε, signifies, *be ye knotted*, alluding to the Custom of Women, who were wont to deck their Heads and adorn their Garments with curious Knots. Humility is the Keeper and Preserver of all Graces, but Pride is the Spoiler and Quencher of them. An Heart well furnished with this Grace, makes us like our Lord and Saviour Christ; he was meek and lowly of Heart, he washed his Disciples Feet, he made himself of no Reputation, but took on him the Form of a Servant, and all

all this for our Sake; and he it is that has recommended Humility to us; nay, has commanded us to take him for our Pattern, particularly in this Vertue.

Let theſe be cogent Arguments to us to uſe our beſt Endeavours for the embracing and practiſing this Grace, that ſo the ſame Mind may be in us, that was in Chriſt.

A Diſ-

A

DISCOURSE

Concerning

Repentance:

Fully opening the Nature of it:

With ſome ſerious Perſuaſives to the ſpeedy ſetting about this Duty.

HAVING in the former Part of this Book ſhewn from the Parable of the *Prodigal Son*, how ready *God* is to pardon *returning Sinners*, I proceed next to ſhew what that *Returning* or *Repenting* is, which

 muſt

must *qualify* them for *pardon*. The *Doctrine* of *Repentance* is the *foundation* of the *Spiritual Building*, which, if it be not well laid, we build our House upon the *Sands*; and such an House must needs fall. It is a great and *comprehensive Duty*, tho' it is by some thrust into a narrow compass. For tho' we frequently speak of *Repentance*, and pretend to it, and hear it preached of, yet there is great *reason* to fear it is but little understood, and less practis'd; and when Men so little understand what *Repentance* is, it is no wonder that they are often guilty of fatal *Mistakes* about it. And since many Men are prepossessed with *false Notions* of this Duty, it will be necessary, before I shew you what *Repentance* is, to let you know what it is not, and vindicate it from those *Mistakes* that Men are in about it. And,

1. They are much mistaken, that think *Repentance* is no more than a parcel of good Words, and exclaiming against our selves as great *Sinners*, and loud Crying to God for Mercy. This we can easily do, and love our Sins nevertheless: It breaks none of our *Bon*

to do this, nor does it put us to any Pain at all; nay, we can do it, and yet be inwardly pleaſed with our Sins in the mean time. This is all the Repentance many Men have, or aim at; they ſin, and they confeſs; but then they ſin again, and they confeſs again, and keep this Round while they live. Many Men do that, which but a little before they confeſs'd was their Sin, and preſently they will confeſs it again, and yet will go on to commit again the ſame things. *This black Circle of ſin and confeſs, and confeſs and ſin, encompaſſes as well* Proteſtants *as* Papiſts. We think *our Sins* will do us no more hurt than *our Confeſſion* does us good; ſo that if at our laſt Gaſp, we can but frame our Breath to the Sound of *Mercy*; and with *the Serpent*, tho' our Ways have been crooked all our Life, we can become ſtrait before we die, we think it is ſufficient, and will go well with us. But certainly we have very baſe and mean Thoughts of God, if we think to charm and cheat him thus eaſily, if we think to mock him with ſuch ineffectual *Confeſſions* as theſe. What Man

would endure ſuch Uſage as this; will our-Neighbour be pleas'd with us, if we confeſs we have done him wrong, when he ſees we continue to do ſtill? Oh, let us not think, that when we have ſerved our *Appetites*, and gratify'd our *Senſual Deſires* all our Lives, it will be ſufficient to ask *God Forgiveneſs* at leiſure, with the laſt Drawings of a *ſinful Breath!* The Devil can well bear we ſhould confeſs our Sins, if we forſake them not: We ſhall not much diſturb him, by ſpeaking againſt his Works, if we deſtroy them not. Theſe are Words of courſe, that neither trouble the Devil, nor yet pleaſe God. The Soldier of Chriſt muſt fight, as well as thus bid Defiance againſt his Sins. And certainly we ſhall at once ſhew more Courage as well as more Sincerity, by forſaking our Sins, than by ſpeaking Evil of them.

2. They are as much miſtaken, that think all Sorrow that ariſes in their Minds, occaſion'd by Sin, is true Repentance, and ſorrowing after a *godly Sort*. The whole of Repentance conſiſts not in a melancholy Fit, and hanging down the

the Head like a *Bulruſh*, retiring a while from Mirth and Company, a ſour Face, and moiſt Eyes; for tho' this Sorrow is a Step to, or a Companion of true *Repentance*, yet alone, it comes much ſhort of the main Work. Such Men do often miſlike the Puniſhment, not the Fault, and grieve not ſo much becauſe themſelves are Wicked, as becauſe God is Juſt: Their Sins bring Afflictions upon them; it is the Affliction not the Sin that makes them ſorrowful. They have a certain Preſage of the Uneaſineſs of the *Flames of Hell*, their galled and aking *Conſciences fly* in their Faces, they feel great Horror in their Minds for thoſe Sins which the World knows nothing of, and they receive upon their Souls the leſſer *Strokes of Hell*. This indeed will make the ſtouteſt Sinner bend, but does not make him a true *Penitent*; for the moſt wicked Men may repent at this rate, and many times do it. *Thus Judas repented himſelf*, and was filled with Grief and Sorrow, *Matth.* 27. 3. Yet who believes that he had true *Repentance*? Thus *Ahab* repented and *humbled himſelf*. And many times the

Disgrace, the Shame and Misery, which the Sinner, by his Wickedness hath brought upon himself, may make him very sorrowful, when yet he is far from being truly penitent. These things may humble the Sinner greatly, and this Humiliation may keep off from him some *Temporal Judgment*, yet it will not secure him from an Eternal one.

3. They are also grosly mistaken, that take passionate Resolutions of Amendment for Repentance; that mistake the Purpose and Intention for the Thing itself. This is the Case of many Men, that are nevertheless Slaves to the Devil, and led Captive by him at his Will. They are surfeited by their Sins, lash'd by their Consciences, terrify'd by their Convictions, or sometimes awaken'd by the *Judgments of God that follow them*; and then they passionately resolve to lay by their most troublesome Sins, and walk in the more *pleasant and delightful Paths of Peace*; they are ready to say, *Let us break their Bands asunder, and cast their Cords from us.* And it were inexpressible happy for them, if they had *Courage* and *Constancy* enough really

really to perform what they ſo well reſolve. But alas! tho' they call theſe Purpoſes by the name of Repentance, they quickly return to their Sins, *according to the true Proverb, The Dog is return'd to his own Vomit again, and the Sow that was waſhed to her wallowing in the Mire*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 22. And then their Actions teſtify to their Faces that they did but diſſemble with God. What ſhall we call a Diſeſteeming and Mocking of God, if this be not ſuch? What the Apoſtle ſaid of ſome, that they were *ever learning, and yet never come to the knowledge of the Truth*, is truly applicable to theſe Men, they are *ever repenting, and yet never arriving at true Repentance.*

4. It is alſo a fatal Miſtake, to think the outward abſtaining from ſome groſſer Acts of Sin, is true Repentance, or any certain Sign of it. This nearly concerns a great Part of Mankind: For there are many, who tho' they will not *kill* their Brother, yet will *hate* him; they will not *commit Adultery*, yet will allow themſelves to *Luſt*. They abſtain from ſome Sin which they have formerly follow'd, yet perhaps are as faulty in

ſomething elſe. They commute ſome one Sin for ſome other; which they think more commodious; and ſuch an Exchange they judge very excuſable. They will avoid the groſſer Enormities which the World obſerves moſt, and yet be full of more refined, ſpiritual and mental Wickedneſs. They will leave their youthful Luſts when they grow in Years, but then they become Slaves to Covetouſneſs or Ambition, or elſe are overgrown with *Atheiſm* and *Unbelief*. They will part with ſome Vice which they cannot ſo well follow, and think they have done well, tho' they keep their moſt deſireable Sins. They abſtain ſome time from the *Gratification* of ſome of their Luſts, not out of Diſaffection, but Policy. Nay, ſometimes they will ſacrifice ſome of their Luſts to the Religion they own, that others may live. They will not only abſtain from, but even ſtrive againſt ſome Sins, that they may keep others ſafe. And upon theſe Terms, Satan himſelf will allow us to mortify ſome Sins; nay, will himſelf caſt the firſt Stone at them, and like a *rocking Gameſter*, purpoſely loſe theſe petty

petty Stakes, that he may afterwards ſweep the Board.

Theſe Things I have named, are not worthy the Name of Repentance, nor yet are they any certain or infallible Signs of it; tho' where there is true Repentance theſe Things alſo are; for Repentance requires this, and a great deal more than all this. It is a greater Work, and makes a greater Change than all the forementionʼd Particulars amount to; it imports no leſs than relinquiſhing all our Sins, and turning to GOD; *Ceaſing to do evil*, and *learning to do well*. He that truly repents, ſubdue, not only his Sin, but his Affection to it alſo. He puts off the Old Man, and puts on the New. This is what I come next to treat of; and as I have begun negatively, and ſhewʼd you what Repentance is not, I now proceed to diſcourſe poſitively of Repentance, and ſhew you what it really is. And,

Repentance is a Grace of God, whereby a Sinner, after a true Senſe of Sin, and godly Sorrow for Sin, is converted from Sin to God.

This

This for the general Definition of Repentance; but, more particularly, it is,

I. A Turning from our Sins, *Ceasing to do evil, Isa.* 1 16. The true Penitent must turn from all his former evil Ways, and must not only abstain from the Acts of Sin, but he must strive against and get the Mastery over his Affection to, and Desire of Sin. But that this may be better understood, let us consider it under the following Heads.

1. It is turning from our Sins when we have Power to commit them. Of many Men it may be said, That their Sin rather leaves them, than they it. To leave off sinning, when we can sin no longer, deserves no Thanks, much less the Title of true Repentance. It was a wise Saying of the Son of *Syrach*, *There is that is hindred from sinning thro' Want*, *Eccles.* 20 21. This sort of Penitents oftner want Strength and Means, or an Opportunity and Temptation, than a Will to commit Sin. They continue in their Sins as long as they are able to follow them, till decrepid Age hath put out the Fire of their Lust, till by their riotous

riotous and extravagant Courſes they have ſpent their Eſtate, and out-run their Credit; ſo that it may be ſaid, with more Truth, *that they do not forſake their Sins, but their Sins forſakes them*; they are the ſame, tho' their Strength and Power be not; and it is not their *Choice*, but the Reſult of a preſſing Neceſſity, that their preſent Actions are not like their former. But let it be conſider'd by ſuch Men, That God does not make an Eſtimation as Men do; He looks on a Man as he is in his Mind and Inclination. He is a Thief in God's Account (*tho' he actually ſteal not*) that would not fear to ſteal, if he was ſure his Wickedneſs would be hid, or go unpuniſhed. And God looks on him as a *Murtherer*, who would commit that Crime, were it not for fear of the *Magiſtrate*, or that he wanted an Opportunity. But on the other Hand, the true Penitent chuſes to forſake his Sin, tho' he is not forc'd from it; he does not only abſtain from his Sins, but he abhors them; there is in his Heart a fixed Hatred to them; his Affection is changed as well as his Life. He is none of thoſe who forſake

their

their Sins, as ſick Men do Meat which they love, they are deny'd it by their Phyſician, as very dangerous for them, and therefore they forbear; but yet they retain their Love to it, and wou'd gladly have the Reſtraint taken off. But he that turns from his Sin in his Youth and Health, that wants neither Power nor Wealth to follow his Sin, nor an Opportunity to uſe his Power, nor yet a Temptation to embrace that Opportunity, and yet abſtains from his Sin from no other Motive but his Love to God, and his Fear of offending him, and Hatred to Sins, this Man deſerves the Name of a true Penitent; eſpecially, if,

2. He perſeveres in ſo doing. Many Men are in little Feuds and Bickerings againſt their Sins, but they riſe to no height and continue but a little time; they are very angry with their Sins by Fits but their Anger cools by degrees, and they run into the Embraces of their Sins again. They fall out with their Sins, juſt as a fond and fooliſh Lover quarrels with his Miſtreſs, when yet a Tear, a Sigh, a fair Invitation, or a Smile, will make up the Breach, and the

the Man is then as fond and fooliſh, and as much a Slave as he was before. But on the other Hand, 'tis our Continuance in Well-doing that makes our Repentance compleat. For tho' many Men think themſelves free from the Chain of Satan, yet they draw it after them, and are eaſily overcome by Sin in fair Circumſtances. When their Sins come to them, like the ſtrange Woman, *Prov.* 5. 3. *whoſe Lips drop as an Honeycomb, and her Mouth ſmoother than Oil*, and makes an Offer of Profit and Pleaſure, and ſays, *All this will I give thee*; when it woes them as *Jael* did *Siſera*, with a *Turn in my Lord turn unto me, fear not*, Judg. 4. 18. when it courts them well array'd, and in *ſumptuous Attire*, then the *Sinner embraces his Sin again*, and his *Love* returns to it as before.

I ſhall here ſet down ſome of thoſe many Arguments which Satan uſes to draw Men to Sin, and endeavour to ſhew you what *Anſwers* are proper to each *Temptation*. This is of the utmoſt Conſequence, and deſerves carefully to be attended to, as tending in ſome meaſure to preſerve Innocence, and thereby

to anticipate Repentance, by leaving no Matter for it.

In tempting ſome, Satan uſes the Pleaſure of the Sin as an Argument. The Temptation comes with a ſmiling Countenance, and a charming Voice: But let Men, when they are aſſaulted by this Temptation, readily anſwer, that tho' the Sin is pleaſant, the Wounds of Conſcience, and the Flames of Hell, are not ſo. We ſee the true Aſpect of Sin in that Lecture, which *David* hath left us in *Pſ.* 38. 2, &c. *Thine Arrows ſtick faſt in me, and thy Hand preſſeth me ſore. There is no Soundneſs in my Fleſh, becauſe of thine Anger; neither is there any Reſt in my Bones, becauſe of my Sin. For mine Iniquities are gone over my Head as an heavy Burden; they are too heavy for me to bear. My Wounds ſtink and are corrupt, becauſe of my Fooliſhneſs. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the Day long. My Loins are filled with a loathſome Diſeaſe, and there is no Soundneſs in my Fleſh. I am feeble and ſore broken, I have roared, becauſe of the Diſquietneſs of my Heart.* This is the Character of the direful Effects of Sin; and he that ſuffers himſe

himſelf to be drawn to Sin, by a Proſpect of Pleaſure, muſt either feel theſe dreadful Pangs of Conſcience, or, which is unſpeakably worſe, the Flames of Hell. He may otherwiſe anſwer this Temptation, by retorting this Argument upon the Tempter, conſidering the Nature of Holineſs, thus, thou ſay'ſt, O *mine Enemy*, that there is Pleaſure in the Commiſſion of this Sin; whereas I know there is much more in the *Mortification* of it. I fear to diſpleaſe God, and diſobey the *Dictates* of my *Conſcience*; and if I ſhould comply with this *Temptation*, I ſhould loſe the beſt *Evidence* of my ſincere walking in the *Ways* of *God's Commandments*.

Again, Satan may tempt to Sin by an Argumeut drawn from the *Secrecy* of it. Now when a Man is attack'd by this Temptation, let him reflect upon God's Omnipreſence, and that his Eye is continually upon him, that by ſuch Conſiderations he may ſilence the Tempter.

But if Satan in tempting to Sin argue the Profit and Advantage that may accrue *thereby*; you may likewiſe retort this

this Argument, and reflect upon the unprofitable Bargain, which our Saviour mentions in *Matth.* 16. 26. *What will it profit a Man if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what will a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

Sometime the Devil may endeavour to draw us into Sin, from a consideration of the *Smallness of the Sin*, that it is but a *Peccadillo*. But this may be opposed by a Consideration of the Greatness of the *Majesty of Heaven*, by whom *Sin is forgiven*, and to whom it is an *Offence*. 'Twill be seasonable then to consider also, that the less the Sin, the less the *Inducement* to commit it; and so much the greater the Folly of that Man, that will destroy his *Peace*, wound his *Conscience*, and grieve the *Holy Spirit* for a Trifle.

At other times, perhaps, he will insinuate the *Mercy of God* is an Encouragement to Sin. But let such as are assaulted by this Temptation consider, that if God be a God of such *exceeding Goodness*, it is an Act of the *deepest Baseness*, the *blackest Ingratitude*, and the greatest Proof of a disingenious

ous and depraved Mind, to Sin thus presumptuously; for *Goodness of God should lead us to Repentance.*

Lastly, When we are encouraged to sin, by the Example of several *Holy Men* in *Scripture*, who sinned, and yet had their *Sins pardon'd*; let us remember, that none ever sinned upon such a Ground as this, that no Examples can justify the Breach of any of *God's Laws*, that these Instances were recorded for Warning, not for Imitation, 1 *Cor.* 10.6. And let us call to mind with what Terrors they were seiz'd for their Sins, let the abovementioned Passage in the 8th *Psalm* deter us from it.

I thought that these *Preservatives* from *Sin*, and *Answers* to *Satan's Temptations*, could no where be more properly placed than under this Head; and they being very useful to the perfecting of *Repentance*, I have insisted the longer on *Perseverance* in Well doing, which, I have shewn, is a principal Part, and the cleareſt Evidence of *sincere Repentance.* I now proceed to the Third Article, which is,

3. Renew'd *Repentance* for repeated Sins, and even for *Humane Frailties*. The true *Penitent*, if he falls by the Violence of Temptation into Sin, he rises again by a hearty and godly Sorrow. If with *Peter* he *denies his Lord*, with *Peter* he retires and *weeps bitterly*. If he miss his Way, as soon as he finds his Error, he returns again, he renews his Pace, he doubles his Diligence, and returns *home* again to his Father.

Thus have I shewn, that the first Part of *Repentance*, *viz.* Turning from Sin consists in refraining from it when we have Power to commit it; in persisting constantly in it; and in renew'd Repentance for casual Sins, and Humane Frailties I pass now to the Second Part of Repentance, which is,

II. Turning to God: *Learning to do well* And this may be properly called Conversion. The Degrees of it are these that follow.

1. A due Sight and Sense of the Danger and Misery of our present State. This is indeed a Motive to, as well as a Part of it. When the Sinner is, as were awaken'd out of a Sleep, and

for

former Part of his Life ſeems now to have been but as a pleaſant Dream; he ſees himſelf now upon the Brink of Hell, and very near being devour'd and ſwallow'd up by thoſe unquenchable Flames. He ſees a Fire from Heaven is falling upon his *Sodom*, and the Avenger of Blood is purſuing him, and his Soul is in great Diſtreſs for a City of Refuge to fly unto. He is as a Man newly awaken'd out of a deep Sleep, when the Houſe is on fire about him, the Building trembles, and the Neighbourhood cries out, and he ſees that danger, which but a little before was by his Sleep hid from his Eyes. He is like a Traveller in a Foreign Land, that has wander'd ſecurely from his right Way, and is ſtray'd into Paths of very great Hazard and Danger, which makes him doubtful, and at a Stand; his Heart miſgives him, and he now conſiders with himſelf, whither this Way will lead him, he ſuſpects that it is too *broad*, and *too much beaten to be* that which leads to *Life*; now he remembers he hath heard his Saviour ſay, *That the Way is narrow, and the Gate is ſtrait that leads to Life*,

Life and there be but few that find it; he remembers that he hath read in the *Word of God*, that the Paths he now treads in will bring him to *Death*, that *without Holiness no one shall see God.* And when he considers what will be the Consequence of his *evil Ways*, how unable he is to dwell with the *devouring Fire*, to lie down in *everlasting Burnings*, and to lose the Favour of God for ever, whose *Benignity is better than Life*. Then it is that he takes the first Step towards *returning to his Father.* He sees that there is but a very little Distance between him and *Destruction*, and that if God takes away his Life, he is undone for ever; and that nothing in this World can countervail so great a Loss as that of the *Favour of God*, and the eternal Welfare of his *immortal Soul*. From a serious Sense of these Things he draws such Consequences as tend to make him a *true Convert.* The first Step the *Psalmist* took towards *turning his Feet unto God's Testimonies*, was that *he thought on his Ways.* Psalm 119. 59. And (as you have already seen it was) when the *Prodigal Son came to himself*, that

that is, when he consider'd the Misery of his *present Condition* that he began to set forward towards his *Father's House*. So that we find it is, from a due Sight and Sense of the Danger, and Misery of our *present Condition*, that there proceeds,

2. A firm Resolution of turning to God: *I will arise and go to my Father*, says the *Prodigal Son*. *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments*, says holy *David*, Psal. 119. 60. And this Resolution the *true Penitent* does not take up lightly and rashly, but considerately, and upon mature Deliberation. This is such Repentance, as is not to be repented of. He will part with his most *beloved Sins*, and endure great Hardship; he will cut off his Right Hand, and pluck out his Right Eye; yea, he will sell all, to obtain this Pearl of the greatest Price; he is fully resolved for God and Heaven; he is willing to accept of *Jesus Christ* for his Lord and Master, as well as his Priest and Saviour. He is not only for *Salvation by Christ*, but for the *Sanctification of Christ*. He desires to be governed by his Laws, as well

well as to be saved by his Merits. He resolves to follow his *Saviour* thro' all *Difficulties* and *Dangers*; he will not leave him, tho' others do. He says, as *Ruth* to *Naomi*, *Ruth* 1. 11, 12. *Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy People shall be my People, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried.* He that truly repents, will follow Christ whither soever he shall lead him. He sits down, as the wise Builder, and considers that this *Undertaking* may cost him no less than his *Reputation* and *Ease*, his Friends and *Estate*, yea, his Liberty and Life. It is greatly to be doubted, that there are but few such *Converts*; yet none but such as are true *Converts*. Many indeed partake of the *Baptism of Christ* and receive of his Body and Blood, that will do nothing for him; they indeed call him their *dear Redeemer*, and *blessed Saviour*; yet will not for his Sake deny themselves the Gratification of a *filthy Lust*. They will follow him for the *Loaves*, and not to the *Cross*; they will cleave to *Christ*, while he feeds them, but when he commands their Esta-

or Lives, they, like the ſwiniſh *Gadarens*, for the loſs of a *Herd of Swine*, deſire him to depart out of their *Coaſts*, *Matth.* 8. 34 or they do as the Ruler in *Luke* 18. 23. who when our *Saviour* told him, he muſt ſell and give to the Poor, *He went away ſorrowful, for he was very rich.* But, on the other hand, the *true Convert* counts all but Droſs, that he may gain *Chriſt*; and he is ſo far convinc'd of his Miſery, without the *Mercy of God*, that he is willing to accept of his Mercy upon any Terms. Therefore it is that he reſolves to turn to God *unreſervedly, deliberately*, and with ſtedfaſt *Reſolution*, and humbly depends upon *God for Grace* and *Strength*, to enable him to encounter with, and overcome whatever Difficulties he may meet with. The laſt Part of our Turning to God, which I ſhall inſiſt on, is,

3. An actual and entire Reſignation of a Man's ſelf unto God; which is the greateſt Degree, and the Perfection and Completion of our *Repentance* and *Converſion*. Then have we truly repented, and not till then, when we give

give *God* our Heart, which we formerly ſet upon the World and our Sins. For the true *Penitent* has bid an *eternal Farewel* to all his *old Companions*, and is become a new *Man*, and is tranſplanted into a *New Family*; and when he remembers his own evil Courſes, it is with Tears in his Eyes, or true Sorrow in his Heart. He has made a ſolemn Choice of *God* for his Portion and Bleſſedneſs. He now eſtems *God*, and his *infinite Perfections* and *Excellencies* above all the Pomp and Pageantry of the World. He chuſes him in all his *Perſonal Relations*. He takes *God* for his *Father*; *Chriſt* for his *Saviour*, his *Redeemer* and *Righteouſneſs*, as the only Way to the *Father*, and Means of Life; and the *Holy Spirit* for his *Sanctifier*, *Counſellor*, *Advocate*, *Comforter*, *Inſtructor*, *Guide* and *Director*, and as the Pledge and Earneſt of his *Inheritance*. He likewiſe chuſes *God* in all his *eſſential Perfections*; he takes him for his Lot and Portion, for his *God*, *Rev.* 21. 3. He takes him as an *All-ſufficient God*. *Gen.* 17. 1. He takes him for his *Sovereign Lord*, this is the *Maſter*

Maſter he will clave to, *Matth.* 6. 24. In a Word, he takes him to be as he is, a true and faithful God; he is reſolved to truſt in him, *Prov* 3. 5. 1 *Tim.* 1. 12. He accepts of the Lord Jeſus in all his Offices, and with all his Inconveniences. He reſigns all his *Powers* and *Faculties*, and his whole *Intereſt* up to God, 2 *Cor.* 8. 5. *Rom.* 12. 1. He chuſes the Laws of Chriſt for the Rule of his *Thoughts*, *Words* and *Actions*; he chuſes them *All* and for *All Times*, and this he does deliberately and underſtandingly.

Thus I have ſhewn you, that he that truly repents, turns *from Sin to God*; from which we may obſerve a very remarkable Change wrought in the Penitent, which is,

1. A *Change* upon his *Underſtanding*. We find, *Gen.* 1. 3. that in the Creation, the firſt of *God's Works* was Light; and God uſes the ſame Method in the New Creature. Before the Light was made, Darkneſs was over the Face of the *Deep*: Juſt ſo it is with the *Natural Man*; he is in very great *Darkneſs* till the Eyes of his Mind are open'd. This is plainly intimated by the Apoſtle, 2 *Cor.* 4. 6.

and that God forms a *New Creature* after the ſame manner as he made the *Old*; *For God who commanded the Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs, hath ſhined in our Hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt.* And we find in the firſt Chapter of St. *John*'s Goſpel, *ver.* 9. that our Saviour is the *True Light who came into the World*; and the End of his coming we find in *Luk.* 1. 79. *To give Light to them that ſit in Darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of Death, and to guide our Feet into the way of Peace.* The *God of this World* no more *blinds his Mind*; and he that was *once Darkneſs*, is now *Light in the Lord.* A great Light breaks in upon his *Underſtanding*, the Scales fall from his Eyes, and he now ſees, *That the Ways of Sin are the greateſt Folly*, and *the Fear of God true Wiſdom.* He ſees that Hell is no Fable, but the unavoidable Conſequent of a wicked Life. He ſees that hitherto he has walked upon the very Brink and Borders of Hell; and had it not been for the *great Mercy of God*, he had never ſeen it till it had been too late. In a Word, he ſees that he had

no Fruit in thoſe things whereof he is now aſhamed; for the end of thoſe things is Death.

2. There is alſo a *remarkable Change* wrought upon his *Will.* Before this Change was wrought, he could pray to God, as to the Matter of his Prayers, very uniformly and agreeably; but his Heart was not right in the ſight of God, that pointed at ſomething elſe, ſhort of what his Words did import. But now he prays earneſtly and heartily: he does not only perform an outward Worſhip to God, but he loves him with all his Heart, and is inwardly delighted with his Service. He has new Ends and Deſigns in the World; his Deſire and Intention is, That GOD may be magnified by him: This is the Mark he aims at, that the Name of *Jeſus* may be great and exalted above every Name in the World. Now he chuſes God for his Lord, Holineſs for his Path, God's Word for his Heritage for ever, and the Exerciſes of Religion for his very Nourihment.

3. The *Affections* are alſo changed, and run in a new Channel.

His *Hope* is in Christ, and all is counted Dung and Dross in Competition with him; and he is contented to lose any thing else, so he but keep this Jewel.

His *Desires* are not so much for Gold, as Grace. He hungers after it, he seeks narrowly for it, and digs for it as for hid Treasure. He strives not so much to grow more rich, as more holy; and he counts it his greatest Conquest to subdue his Corruptions.

His *Joys* are more in keeping God's Testimonies, than in great Riches. He delights in the Law of the Lord, and rejoyces most in the *Thoughts of Christ*, in his Presence, and the Prosperity of his People.

His *Cares* are now not so much for the World, as for the real Security of his Soul. He is sedulously inquisitive what he shall do to be saved; and when he is informed what is the *Will* of *God*, he is most assiduous in doing it.

His *Fears* are not so much of *Suffering*, as *Sinning*. Formerly nothing sounded so terrible to him as *Pain* or *Poverty*, or *Disgrace*: Now these do no not appear so

ſo formidable, when they come in Competition with God's Diſhonour or Diſpleaſure. He walks warily, and is always afraid leſt he ſhould tread on a Snare. It is a deadly Wound to his Heart, to think of loſing God's Favour.

His *Sorrows* and *Grief* have a new Vent, 1 *Cor.* 7. 9. *&c.* The View of his Sins, the Sight of a Chriſt crucified, what would ſcarce ſtir his Heart before, do now mightily affect him.

His *Love* runs another way now than what it did formerly. With holy *Auguſtine* and *Ignatius*, he is in his Element, when he is wrapt up in a ſweet Contemplation of the Love of Chriſt, in ſuffering and dying for, and redeeming loſt Mankind.

His *Hatred* boils, and his *Anger* burns againſt Sin. He is ſtirr'd with Indignation at himſelf, when he conſiders how long he has gone on in Sin, and neglected God and the eternal Salvation of his immortal Soul. But I proceed:

4. That there is a great and remarkable Change wrought upon him, he ſhews forth in his *Life* and *Converſation*. He

He lived after the manner, and was conformed to the Counſel of this *World*, but now he is transformed, and is reſolved that the Time paſt ſhall ſuffice, that he has wrought the Will of the Gentiles. Tho' he lives upon Earth, his Converſation is in Heaven. No ſooner has God writ his Law in his Heart, but he thenceforward walks in his Statutes, and keeps his Judgments. Tho' Sin may dwell in him, it has not Dominion over him. He makes moſt Conſcience of the greateſt Sins, yet he makes true Conſcience of leſſer Sins. He does not only tyth the Mint and Cummin, but has alſo a regard to Mercy and Judgment. He does not pretend to Piety, and neglect Morality; but he delights in the Law of the Lord, and gives himſelf to Prayer, and he *redeems his Sins by Alms, and his Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor.* Dan. 4. 27. He deſires to live honeſtly, and keep a Conſcience void of Offence toward *God* and *Men*. He is merciful to others Failings, and very ſevere to his own; and can ſooner forgive any than himſelf. He is *reſolved* rather to ſuffer than to ſin.

He

He is moſt ſevere to the Sin that is naturally moſt dear; and chuſes that ſooneſt which doth croſs the Fleſh moſt; he can rely upon the *Divine Promiſes*, when others live upon their Poſſeſſions; he allows himſelf in the Neglect of no Duty, but reſerves his higheſt Zeal for the Duties of moſt Weight: In a word, in whatever he does, or goes about, he aims at the *Glory of God*, and to it ſubjects himſelf and all his Worldly Intereſt.

Thus have I ſhewn you as largely as I could in this narrow Compend, both what Repentance *is not*, and what *it is*: I proceed now practically to improve the whole; and ſhall draw from what I have ſaid, a Uſe of Information, and a Uſe of Exhortation. I begin with the

Firſt USE of Information

And from what has been ſaid, we may learn,

1. The great Extent of this Duty. This Inference flows ſo naturally from what I have been diſcourſing, that I

need not ſay much to illuſtrate it. Review the foregoing Heads, and you will ſee *Repentance* is not a Duty of ſo ſmall Conſequence and Concernment as moſt imagine, neither is it ſo eaſily p rform-ed: For tho' we may repent of all our Sins, and our *Repentance* may be true, and our Sins may be forgiven upon our *Repentance*; yet we muſt live in the daily Practice of it.

2. We learn hence, that there are but few that truly repent, and that the Number of them that *deceive themſelves*, with reſpect to this Duty, is great. There are many who think *Repentance* conſiſts in exclaiming againſt *themſelves*, as great Sinners, and crying to GOD for Mercy. Others who have ſuffer'd many Inconveniencies in this Life, by reaſon of their Sins, and have a *Sorrow* upon them, think that this *Sorrow* muſt needs be true *Repentance*; never conſidering that this *Sorrow* is occaſion'd by their Sufferings for Sin, not by the Sin it ſelf. Others there are, who think that becauſe they have purpoſed to repent and forſake their Sins, they have truly repented. Others alſo think that they have

have perform'd this Duty aright, becauſe they are ſomewhat reform'd, and abſtain from the groſſer Acts of Sin; tho' this oftentimes proceeds from *Education*, *Human Laws*, or the Force of *Affliction*. Others deceive themſelves, by thinking their State is good, becauſe they have been baptiz'd into the *Chriſtian Faith*. But, alas! the Caſe of theſe is extreamly ſad and miſerable; for thoſe are fartheſt from *Converſion*, who do not ſee that they have need of ſuch a Change, or think they are already turn'd. But I proceed to the

Second USE of Exhortation.

Having gone thus far, I proceed next to exhort you to the *Practice of Repentance*; in order to which (that my *Perſwaſions* may be more forcible and laſting) I ſhall make uſe of the following Motives.

1. It is our Duty, becauſe God commands it, as you may read in many *Places* of the *Holy Scripture*; of which I ſhall offer two or three to your Conſideration. I begin with that in *Iſaiah*,

55.

55. 6, 7. *Seek ye the* LORD *while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the Wicked forſake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the* LORD, *and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* This Paſſage contains not only a Divine Injunction of Repentance, but of ſpeedy Repentance; and not only ſo, but a gracious Promiſe of Acceptance and Pardon. See alſo Joel 2. 13. *Rent your Hearts and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is Gracious,* &c. This is alſo the Voice of the New Teſtament, as we may ſee in *Matth.* 3. 2. *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* Acts 3. 19. *Repent therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the time of Refreſhing ſhall come from the Preſence of the Lord.*

2. As it is our Duty, ſo it is our Intereſt; for without Repentance there is no Remiſſion of Sins, as is plain from that laſt recited Paſſage, where Repentance is ſaid to be not only neceſſary by a Neceſſity of Precept, but alſo by a Neceſſity of Means. This will further

ther appear, if we but read the following Paſſages of the Sacred Text; Heb. 12. 14. *Without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee God.* Rom. 8. 13. *If we live after the Fleſh we ſhall die.* John 3. 3. *Except a Man be born again, he cannot ſee the Kingdom of God.* Gal. 6. 7. *Whatſoever a Man ſows, that ſhall he alſo reap. For he that ſoweth to the Fleſh, ſhall of the Fleſh reap Corruption: But he that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap Life everlaſting.* Moreover, the Scriptures tell us diſtinctly and ſeverally what thoſe Evils are, whereof we muſt beware. *Gal.* 5. 19. &c. *Now the Works of the Fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Sedition, Hereſies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch like: Of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And again, *Epheſ.* 5. 6. *For theſe things ſake the Wrath of God comes upon the Children of Diſobedience.* Nay, be our Privileges and Prerogatives never ſo great, yet none of them ſhall ſupercede the neceſſity

ceſſity of *Repentance* and a *Holy Life*. Tho' we have a *Levite* for our Prieſt, and never ſo Orthodox a *Faith*; yet if at the ſame time we have an Idol for our *God*, and our *Manners* be profane, we are ſtill in the Way that leads down to *the Chambers of Death*. Nay, our having been baptized into the *Chriſtian Church*, and living in a *Chriſtian Nation*, will enhance our Condemnation, if we live not anſwerable to ſo great Mercies. To confirm all this, let us conſider the *Nature of God*, who is *Holineſs it ſelf*, and cannot be delighted with thoſe that continue impenitent. Let us alſo conſider the Nature of that Happineſs, which God has reſerv'd for thoſe that obey his Laws: We are told that no *unclean thing* ſhall enter into it; ſo that he who would be happy, muſt be holy. For as *Wickedneſs* lays a Foundation for our Miſery, and a Train for our Deſtruction; ſo *Holineſs* here, is of abſolute Neceſſity to our *Happineſs* hereafter: They being rather two ſeveral Notions of one Thing, than Things in themſelves diſtinct. We are here as in a State of Tryal or Probation; and if

if we improve our Time, if we mortify and ſubdue our evil Affections, then we ſhall be removed to an higher Form, and added to *the Spirits of Juſt Men made perfect*: But if we trifle away our time, or ſpend it amiſs, we ſhall be thrown down among *Hypocrites* and *Unbelievers*. Nor indeed can it be otherwiſe: For what ſhould a wicked Man do in Heaven? Certainly ſuch a State would be a Torment to him, if the Thing were poſſible: Inſtead of being his Happineſs, it would be his Priſon. He would ſoon be weary of that State, which now he deems ſo much to deſire. What Pleaſure would he find in ſinging perpetual Praiſes to God, that is now Weary of giving him Thanks? What Content wou'd the covetous Worldling find in Heaven? There he will find no Leaſes or Farms to purchaſe, no Widows to oppreſs, no Bargains to make, no Money to put to Uſury, no Forfeitures to receive. The Voluptuous Man would find little Pleaſure, where is neither Marrying, nor giving in Marriage; no Tavern or Alehouſe, no Jolly Companion to Quaff and Ca-

rouſe withal. The proud Man would take little Delight in a conſtant aſcribing all Honour and Praiſe to GOD. Such Men are not fit for Glory, who are ſo far from Grace. They are not fit for the Enjoyment of God, and the Society of thoſe that are ſanctified; becauſe they have not mortified their *Luſts*; therefore they muſt lie down for ever with the *Devil* and his *Angels*, where there once beloved *ſenſual Appetites* ſhall be as ſo many *Tormentors* to them. Oh then, what an Argument ſhould this be to us, for our *Repenting*, and ſeeking *Mercy*, while *Mercy* may be had!

(3.) The *Third Motive* I ſhall uſe, is, The *dangerous and miſerable State* of all thoſe that have not yet truly repented of their Sins. Theſe are within an Hair's Breadth of *Hell*, they walk daily upon the Brink of the *Bottomleſs Pit*. But to paint out to the Life the deplorable Caſe they are in, I muſt decypher to you the moſt *Diabolical Deformity* of Sin; I muſt uncover the Face of the deep and devouring Gulph of *Tophet*, and diſplay its Terrrors; I muſt open the

the Gates of the *infernal Cavern*, that they may ſee what they are like to ſuffer for their Sins. Next I muſt bring *Paradiſe* into view, and repreſent the *Kingdom of Heaven* as much to Advantage as the *Tempter* did the *Kingdoms of the World*, and *the Glory thereof*, to our *Saviour*: I muſt draw an Extract of the *Beauties of Happineſs*, and the *Glories of the Goſpel*. But, alas! tho' I had the Tongue of the moſt *Rhetorical Orator*, or the Pen of the readieſt Writer, I could not do this. I proceed therefore with my utmoſt, tho' poor Endeavours, to perſuade you to the preſent and ſpeedy ſetting about this Duty.

And here let me reaſon the Caſe with thoſe that know ſome Care muſt be taken of their Souls before they die, and yet put off their *Repentance* to another time; and I doubt not to make it appear, that they egregiouſly deceive themſelves, when they ſay, they will repent hereafter, and that it is probable they will not repent at all, but will die in their Sins, and be miſerable to all Eternity.

(1.) Let

(1.) Let him that ſays he will repent hereafter, conſider what is the Reaſon why he cannot do it now; and whether the very ſame Reaſon that hinders him from reforming now, will not always hinder him. Say what it is, thou that makeſt theſe Delays, that keep thee from reforming preſently: Is it the want of Power to do it? And how doſt thou know thy Ability will be greater hereafter than now? Is it becauſe the Rules of the Goſpel are ſevere and ſtrict? And will they not be as ſevere hereafter as now they are? Or doſt thou hope that God will unbend his Laws, *which are unalterable*, to ſtoop to *thy Profaneneſs*? Or doſt thou delay thy *Amendment* and *Repentance* becauſe thy Sins are many and great, and thou deſpaireſt of Mercy? And will not the mighty *Heap* be as great hereafter as now? Is it thy Worldly Buſineſs? And will it not always be ſo? That which now hinders thee will always do ſo, till it be taken out of the Way: Things ſtanding as they are, the Event and Iſſue muſt needs be the ſame. That which makes thee unfit to Day, will make

make thee as unfit to Morrow, or any other Time. Nay,

(2.) More unfit. It is here as in a Wound; the longer it continues, the harder it is to be cur'd, whereas a timely Dreſſing may cure it quickly. A Diſeaſe that is timely taken, is eaſily cur'd; but if it ſtay till it have altered the Blood, and deſtroyed the Tone and Strength of the Part affected, and has brought a general ill Habit of Body, it may be then paſt all Remedy. Whatever unfits thee now, will make thee much more ſo hereafter. For as thy Work will then be more hard; ſo will thy Strength be leſs, thy Time ſhorter, thy Diſcouragements greater, and thy Temptations and Objections ſtronger than they were before. He that thinks of repenting on his Death-bed, ſhould remember that he will have a greater Task to do, and leſs Time and Strength to do it in than now he hath.

If thy Sins are ſo many, and ſo great now, that thou doſt almoſt deſpair of Mercy, certainly they will be more and greater then: If it be troubleſome to thee now to *look back* upon thy old Scores,

Scores, ſurely there will be more o
Labour and Diſcouragement in it, t
undo and unravel the Sins of a long
Life: If now thou thinkeſt the Com
mands of Chriſt ſevere and ſtrict, cer
tainly hereafter, when thou haſt been
more engaged in Sin, and longer wed
ded to the World, and thy Luſts are
faſter rivited to thy Soul, thou wilt
think more hardly of a *holy Life*, and the
Commands of Chriſt will be more grie
vous to thee. If now *Repentance* be ſo
hard a Task, what will it be when thy
Day is almoſt ſpent, and the Sun of thy
Life is ſetting?

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(3.) Conſider, thou that ſay'ſt thou
wilt repent hereafter, whether thou haſt
not formerly promiſed to repent, and
yet broken thy Word? And if thou
haſt, why ſhouldſt thou believe thy ſelf
again? Didſt thou never upon ſome
Sick-bed, or under ſome great Danger
make a Vow, *That if God would deliver
thee, he ſhould be thy God*; and yet for
all that, when the Danger hath been
over thou haſt returned to thy Sins and
evil Ways again? And haſt thou not
reaſon to think, that as thou didſt then

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but dissemble with God, so now thou dost but mock him? Thy deceitful Heart is still in thy Breast, and as ready to impose upon thee as ever.

(4.) Consider, thou that say'st, thou wilt repent *to Morrow*, when this *Morrow* will come. Thou wilt repent hereafter, thou say'st; but that is an unlimited Word; whereas *God limiteth a certain Day, saying, To Day if ye will hear his Voice.* Heb. 4. 7. And again, *Behold now is the accepted Time, behold now is the Day of Salvation,* 2 Cor. 6. 2. God says, *Now*, we say *Hereafter*: God says *To Day*, we say *To Morrow*: God's time is come, but our time is not come. There is no end of these Delays; they are the Devil's Device to draw us into an inevitable Destruction. He can well endure that we should promise to repent hereafter, if in the mean time we live in our Sins. For whatever we may suppose to our selves, it often appears, that he who promises to repent *to Morrow*, does, when *to Morrow* come, promise the same the next Day; and so on, till there be no time left, to run out.

From

From theſe Conſiderations, let m
earneſtly beſeech the Reader, as h
tenders the Welfare of his immort
Soul, to uſe no more vain Delays. Fo
he that depends on the laſt Hour, an
neglects the preſent Seaſon, in Hop
of one to come, is like to be deceiv
at laſt.

FINIS.